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THE IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS  
OF NOTIONAL-FUNCTIONAL SYLLABUSES

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In memory of my parents

*Julia and Francisco.*

To *Manuelito* and *Roseane* for

their affection and understanding.

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## A B S T R A C T

This dissertation examines the extent to which Notional/Functional theory may be put into practice.

We begin by giving a brief account of attitudes to language teaching since the 16th century, before looking at more recent "Structural", "Situational" and "Cognitive" approaches.

We then move on to consider in greater detail both the concept of "Communicative" teaching and its theoretical justification. Here we find it necessary to distinguish Chomsky's "grammatical competence" from the "communicative competence" of Dell Hymes and others. We look at the first tentative steps towards functional teaching before concentrating our attention on Notional/Functional theory as conceived by David Wilkins, noting that he proposes a "weakest application" as well as a "stronger application". His reservations about types of courses that might be suitable for Notional Syllabuses are also observed.

The practical part of the dissertation involves a critical examination of two textbooks whose authors claim to have adopted the Notional/Functional Approach. This is done by questioning the extent to which each book fulfils certain requirements which seem to us to be fundamental to language teaching and Notional/Functional theory.

We find that, while at least one of the books is certainly partly successful, it nevertheless remains "notionalized", that is, a very much weak version of the theory indeed - rather than "notional", which means no deviation from Wilkin's<sup>1</sup> theories.

In conclusion we point out that the two textbooks used in our analysis were early attempts to apply Notional/Functional theory and, as such, obviously likely to suffer from the difficulties that confront all pioneering work. Later efforts may well be more successful. Nevertheless, the books selected clearly served to point out some of the problems encountered in attempts to put Notional/Functional theory into practice, which was the main aim of our dissertation.



## R E S U M O

Esta dissertação procura examinar até que ponto os fundamentos teóricos Nocionais/Funcionais podem ser postos em prática.

Ao iniciar nosso trabalho expusemos, num breve relato, as atitudes em relação ao ensino de línguas desde o século XVI. Em seguida nos detivemos no estudo de métodos mais em voga nas últimas décadas, baseados nas escolas Estrutural, Situacional e Cognitiva.

A partir daí consideramos, com mais detalhes, o conceito de "Ensino Comunicativo" e suas justificações teóricas. Aqui julgamos necessário distinguir o conceito de "competência gramatical", de autoria de Chomsky, daquele desenvolvido por Dell Hymes e outros - o da "competência comunicativa". Apresentamos as primeiras tentativas no sentido de aplicar o ensino funcional como David Wilkins o concebeu, notando que ele propõe tanto a "aplicação mais fraca" (the weakest application) como a "aplicação mais forte" (the strongest application).

A parte prática desta dissertação envolve um exame crítico de dois livros-texto cujos autores se proclamam seguidores da abordagem Nocional/Funcional. Isto é feito questionando até que ponto cada livro estabelece condições que nos parecem fundamentais ao ensino de línguas e à teoria Nocional/Funcional.

Concluimos, ao final da nossa pesquisa, que, em quanto um dos livros nos parece, em parte, bem sucedido, per

manece no entanto "nocionalizado" - e isto significa uma ver  
são realmente muito enfraquecida da teoria - e não "nocional",  
isto é, uma adesão total e irrestrita à teoria proposta por  
Wilkins. A partir da evidência dos fatos estudados, somos  
de opinião de que urge a necessidade de um aprofundamento nas  
pesquisas feitas até então, a fim de que a Teoria Nocional /  
Funcional seja posta em prática mais efetivamente.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 ATTITUDES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING

It is often remarked that language is in a constant state of flux, ever-changing and adapting itself to different situations and circumstances and the needs of its users. The same might well be said of attitudes to language teaching. Each new generation of linguistic theorists appear to reject the assumptions of their predecessors and suggest innovations in language teaching which are eagerly seized upon by others and in time come to form the basis of the new orthodoxy, until they in turn are challenged.

This is a very healthy state of affairs because, despite the fact that the "perfect" language teaching method is almost certainly an illusion, it clearly shows that linguists and teachers are not content to sit back and accept the situation as they find it, but feel the need to try to improve their understanding of the nature of language, how it works and how best it may be taught.

Thus, in the 20th century we have seen a succession of approaches to language teaching, each with its own theoretical assumptions and justifications. At one stage, for example, foreign languages tended to be taught through and for the sake of their literature. Little attention was paid to the learner's ability to speak the language or understand it when spoken by a native-speaker. Later, partly as a reaction against this and partly as a result of international circumstances, the oral-aural skills came to take precedence and all efforts were directed towards teaching the spoken form of the language in question.

This in turn led to a concern with how best to achieve oral fluency: one school of thought advocated constant repetition in the form of drills, on the assumption that learning a language was a matter of habit formation, while others claimed that true familiarity with a language must be based on a sound understanding of its grammatical

rules.

During the past few years there has been a further shift in the focus of attention. Emphasis is now placed on language as a form of social interaction, governed by such variables as time, place, topic and the social roles of the interlocutors. Grammatical competence no longer seems to be enough, and the teacher's task is seen as trying to equip the learner with "communicative" competence, which for the present purposes may be loosely defined as the ability to select utterances which are not merely, or even necessarily, grammatically "correct" but appropriate to the particular situation.

This is almost certainly not the end of the road, and in time new ideas will undoubtedly emerge to cause yet another reappraisal. Nevertheless, it is from this line of thought that Notional/Functional theory has sprung, and as it is the concern of this dissertation to examine Notional/Functional theory and its practical applicability to language teaching in the light of current research, it is not for us to speculate on future developments here. Our task will be simply to discuss the theory in some detail, indicating in what ways it breaks new grounds and then to analyse its practical implications and limitations by examining textbooks which purport to take this theory as their starting point.

However, in order to put Notional/Functional theory into its proper perspective it will first be necessary to give a brief historical outline of the development of the methodological theory and then to take a more detailed look at the main approaches of the past fifty years.

## 1.2 A HISTORICAL SURVEY

Men have been interested in the language they speak for centuries, but no one has yet been able to describe such a complex phenomenon in its entirety. Why is language so important to us? Among many other aspects, its importance is due to the fact that our vision of the world is largely

conditioned by language, hence a wider knowledge of its nature and functioning will undoubtedly help enrich the quality of our lives.

This interest in language is reflected in the ever-growing demand for foreign language learning. It is not only sufficient for us to master our own native tongue, but we think it necessary to open up the windows of the world outside ours. Since language teaching and learning are very closely related subjects, we shall make an attempt, in this chapter, to trace a profile of the directions followed by language teaching methodologists throughout the years.

Finding a method which suits all situations has been the methodologist's golden dream. Old methods disappear, new approaches come into fashion, and each time a new approach appears, many teachers feel inclined to consider it as a "cure-all" for the innumerable problems that assail language teaching.

These changes reflect the ways in which the various schools of thought envisage language. To our mind, far from being harmful, this constant state of flux has proved to be highly beneficial, since the research undertaken by specialists has broadened perspectives towards language and teaching learning, thus smoothing the path for future learners.

We shall see, as this chapter develops, that there have been many tentative approaches to language teaching. We shall study some of them and discuss their main features in the light of the most influential theoretical concepts which govern language learning. In addition to this we shall see the practical implications for language teaching which have resulted from these views.

The following are the approaches which will be discussed in this piece of work:

- a) The Structural Approach
- b) The Situational Approach
- c) The Cognitive Approach
- d) The Notional/Functional Approach

These were chosen because they appear to reflect, each in a distinct way, the different views which relate language to language <sup>and</sup> teaching learning.

We shall later dedicate a large section to the Notional/Functional Approach because it seems to us that it represents a new trend in the teaching of foreign languages, that of "Communicative teaching". Since the main objective of this dissertation is to find out to what extent this new approach has something more permanent to offer teachers, we shall obviously need to carry out a more detailed analysis of its theoretical principles, together with an incursion into the field of practical application.

To have a better idea of how this search for a fully developed approach to language teaching has been carried out until recent times, a brief historical survey of what has been done in this field seems appropriate.

According to Mackey<sup>1</sup>, the first grounds for complaints about bad methods date back to the 16th century, when Di Marinis said that he wanted to make "Latinists and not grammarians out of his students". As we know, the study of languages at the time was based on Latin and Greek classical texts, the content of which was considered to be the pure, the correct, the "good" language. For the supporters of these views, far from being one of the necessary elements for learning effectively, the teaching of grammar happened to become an end in itself--the only important aim to be achieved when learning a language.

The teaching programme which resulted from this approach did not follow an objective plan and most time consisted of a selection of literary texts, the grammar of which was studied in depth.

In the 17th century Comenius, who became famous for his great interest in educational matters, conceived new ideas. He firmly believed that language learning should not consist of the learning of grammar in itself. Comenius encouraged his students to study grammar inductively. Imitation and repetition, followed by oral practice, were considered to be highly effective classroom procedures.

His ideas represented an innovation in the field of language teaching. Nevertheless, those principles were largely condemned, since they put in danger the great prestige of the classics within the educational context of the time. Consequently the position maintained by the traditional educators of the time prevailed over the other, and by the end of the 18th century the study of Latin grammar once again became dominant.

Mackey goes on to say that later on, in the mid 19th century, the study of texts was revived through Plötz. He organised and systematized what has been called the "Grammar Translation Method", which included rules and paradigms as well as sentences for translation. Plötz advocated the study of texts, the composition of which consisted of simple sentences, whose grammar, in turn, ought to be studied inductively. Teachers were to use the first language, since according to Plötz's ideas, this would facilitate the acquisition of the second language. We shall see that some of these ideas have reappeared and been developed in the 20th century by the advocates of the Cognitive Approach, giving rise to the "Indirect Method", whose principles will be discussed later in this chapter.

About the end of the 19th century two new elements were added to language teaching: physical activity and elements of phonetics. Principles such as the association of ideas, the use of gestures and visualisation were accepted. The use of games and activities was fostered. Grammar was studied inductively. Based on these ideas a new approach to language was then proposed. It was presented by Viëtor, a

German writer from Leipzig<sup>2</sup>, who first used elements of phonetics to form a method. His new approach to teaching emphasized the importance of the spoken language.

Sentences should be studied in context, not in isolation. The texts were not to be chosen haphazardly, but according to the interests of the learner. When introducing new items, certain steps should be followed: listening to the piece of language introduced and looking at its written reproduction on the board, repeating it aloud and finally writing it.

According to Mackey<sup>3</sup>, by this time a great revolution had taken place: "language teaching methods had swung from the strict application of principles of logic to the single-minded practice of principles of psychology".

These principles advocated by Viëtor were systematized and a new method appeared: "the Direct Method"<sup>4</sup>, the influence of which spread rapidly through Europe in the early part of this century. However, as Mackey points out, if the Direct Method happened to be a success in Europe, namely in England, France, Switzerland and Germany, it did not gain much prestige in America, where the spoken approach was not considered to be of primary importance. Conversely, there, great importance was attached to reading. On account of these ideas, an improvement in text books for translation was noticed. These books crossed the frontiers of America and were applied in several other countries, thus enlarging the scope of application of the Grammar-Translation Method outside America.

Having had a quick look at ideas that have influenced language teaching throughout the centuries, we now proceed with our study by analysing, in a more detailed way, what has been done in this field in our century.

Throughout the first and the second decades of the 20th century the teaching was done through reading. The student who was interested in conversational English had to



attend a private school to fulfil his expectations.

When World War II broke out a new factor had to be considered: the necessity of studying languages for the purpose of oral interchange with foreign countries. As it was impossible to satisfy the demands for fluent speakers in foreign languages through those "traditional" methods in vogue at the time, the Army, in conjunction with the University, devised what has been called the "Army Method", whose main objective included a fluent speaking knowledge of the language. On account of this, the limits set by the supporters of approaches based on the exploitation of texts were surpassed: a thorough contact with the spoken language was fostered, with a minimum of time spent on reading and writing in the foreign language. In addition to the great emphasis given to oral work, two procedures were considered to be central to this approach: imitation and drills. These, in turn, were combined with extra work carried out in language laboratories.

We found it necessary to make this incursion into the trends in the most influential views on language teaching, because we believe that the approaches that we shall discuss from this point on, in this chapter, originated in the past. Although a full scientific study of the language had not yet been structured at the time, we can now infer from this exposition of methods outlined above---namely the Grammar Translation and the Direct Methods---that they bore theoretical implications for much of the work that was to follow.

### 1.3 MORE RECENT APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE

It is not for us to provide a detailed account of all the methods that ever existed. A more detailed explanation of the most influential ones is given by Mackey<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, in giving this brief summary, we had a purpose in mind: to consider the fact that since the very beginning - till recent times - the pendulum of language learning and teaching methodology has been swinging between two extremes:

on the one hand some methodologists advocate that language teaching should focus on an active, more or less "automatic" oral use of language; on the other hand some point out that students must be provided with sufficient knowledge of the rules which make up a given language. Although these positions display different attitudes to the nature of language acquisition, they bear some resemblance in that they both indicate that learning a language effectively consists in mastering its grammatical system, be it acquired through the automatic learning of its structures, or by the conscious application of its rules.

The different attitudes towards language learning and teaching, mentioned above, displayed by textbook writers in their practical work, reflect the results obtained by investigation made into the relationship which exists between language and language learning.

Consequently, at this point, we find it necessary to discuss some of the theoretical assumptions that underlie those views. As this investigation develops, we realize that approaches to language reveal, to a certain extent, underlying principles concerning theory, description and language learning. They are not chosen haphazardly.

From this point on, then, we shall make an attempt to see to what extent the theoretical assumptions implied by the assertions noted above coincide with the postulates advocated by the different schools of thought.

### 1.3.1 STRUCTURAL APPROACH

As suggested previously the proposed analysis will proceed as follows:

- a) A brief discussion of the theoretical points advocated by the school of thought in question.
- b) A rapid view of the practical application of these principles to language teaching.

It is worth pointing out the importance of the words "automatic oral use" within the linguistic climate of the fifties. The approach advocated by the Army Method, which included practices such as repetition and imitation of the native model, was supported by a very influential linguist at the time, Leonard Bloomfield, who condemned the use of the grammar translation approach in the school programmes.

Bloomfield based his studies on a mechanist view of man. As a behaviourist, he believed that "language is a chain of material cause-effect sequence". Consequently a linguistic analysis of language, based on these principles, advocates the notion that language utterances are habit responses to stimuli learnt by a conditioning process.

To understand how these ideas have later been linked to the practical work in the classroom, we shall begin by tracing the general principles of Behaviourist theory.

The conditions proposed by Behaviourists concerning language learning can be summarized, according to Dakin<sup>6</sup>, in two laws and one principle: a) the "law of exercise", which states that for learning to take place, an "organism must be responding actively and repeatedly". b) the second law, which is the "law of effect" leads to the principle of shaping, i.e. the organism's responses are shaped step by step, till the terminal behaviour is reached.

According to Behaviourists, learning a language is a "mechanical process of habit formation". Its principles may be equally applied to any kind of learning. For them, learning a language is the same as learning how to drive a car or play the piano. Language is but a skill that can be acquired as others can.

This theory of learning strongly influenced the teaching of English as a foreign language and gave rise to the Structuralist approach to language teaching, which, later on developed into what has been called the Structural/Situational Approach to language teaching, whose characteristics will be seen later in this chapter.

Some important steps must be followed, Structuralists say, for effective learning to take place. Claiming that "language is a form of behaviour" and consequently, to be coherent with the principles of stimulus- response- reward, they advocate certain types of classroom practices, as well as some attitudes towards teaching: a) The overriding importance given to spoken language as opposed to the written one. Speech is primary, they say, and the oral-aural approach is considered to be the most effective one for the development of techniques designed to give a practical command of the language in question. b) The belief that learning must be achieved through "patterned practice". For this reason, oral drills are considered to be of paramount importance, for, according to Behaviourists' views, only by correct responding do students learn. By making students repeat the structures many times, they point out, the teacher will prevent the students from making mistakes. If the student is left free to choose the patterns of language by himself, they say, he will be bound to make mistakes, and mistakes must be forestalled at all costs, as they create "bad habits". c) Rules are to be avoided, so an inductive approach to learning grammar is encouraged. d) When working out a syllabus a careful gradation of the material to be taught is necessary. Learning for them is a cumulative process, and, as such, small bits of language are organized, and gradually presented to the student.

The most influential method based on these principles was the "Audio-Lingual Method", which began to be known in the late fifties. Its supporters largely condemned what they called "traditional methods of learning a foreign language". Text-books based on this method have been widely used till very recently. For the sake of illustration, we shall quote L.G.Alexander. The famous text-book writer, in his preface to the teacher, attacks the grammar rule and translation based methods, and makes clear his total disapproval of their procedures.

"Learning a language is not a matter of acquiring a set of rules and building up a large vocabulary. The teacher's effort should not be directed at informing his student about a

language, but enabling them to use it... The old-fashioned translation and grammar rule methods are extremely wasteful and inefficient, for the student is actually encouraged to make mistakes: he is asked to perform skills before he is adequately prepared. ...At some point in the course students inevitably become remedial students and the teacher is faced with the problem of remedying what has been incorrectly learnt. No approach could be more ineffective, wasteful and inefficient. The student should be trained to learn by making as few mistakes as possible... If he is to make the most of his abilities, he must be trained to adopt correct learning habits".<sup>7</sup>

In addition to those principles mentioned previously, the Audio-Lingual Method supporters also advocate the following classroom practices:

a) The memorization of dialogues.

b) The repetition of patterned responses. In this way they aim at providing the learner with near-native speed and pronunciation.

It is worthwhile pointing out that Behaviourists paid little attention to the concept of meaning. This attitude can be explained in the light of the mechanist view of man: since meaning happens to be in the mind and as such difficult to measure scientifically, the physical manifestation of language is, they say, what must be taken into account. This position led to a search for ways of providing the student with a reasonable mastery of the forms of the language studied. Language is then presented to the learner as a "system of forms", not as a "collection of meanings". A syllabus based on the principles mentioned above will define its teaching in terms of "structure". It is considered a "linguistic" or "grammatical" syllabus, in that the pieces of language to be taught are to be analysed into structural patterns.

The emphasis given to form was one of the weaknesses of the Audio-Lingual Method. In his "Linguistics and Language Teaching" Wilkins<sup>8</sup> says that this method failed to prepare the learner to use language for communication.

Up to now we have described two attitudes towards language learning: that in which language learning is conceived of as an intellectual discipline, studied for its own sake without having any link with the social environment the speakers may be involved in. The second attitude, the one adopted by structuralists, differs in one aspect: by advocating that language is to be seen as a "set of conditioning responses to the environment they do admit that there is a relationship between language and the environment"<sup>9</sup>. However, as Keith Morrow, points out, they are equal in that language here, once again, is regarded as a thing separate and complete in itself<sup>10</sup>.

### 1.3.2 SITUATIONAL APPROACH

After many years of total adherence to the idea that the material designed for teaching activities should be strictly defined in linguistic terms, some dissatisfaction began to be noticed and another approach to language emerged: the Situational Approach. What was the novelty introduced by the supporters of the new approach? They recognized that language could not be regarded as a "monolithic whole" and as such the learner should be provided with varieties extracted from the common core to fit the various situations the learner happened to find himself in. Consequently some consideration should be given to the setting: Where are we going to use a given structure? Is the structure taught appropriate to the situation we are in? As soon as these ideas surfaced, new courses appeared, claiming to be situationally based.

For the sake of illustration we shall quote a passage extracted from "Situational English"<sup>11</sup> in which some of the features of the so-called "Situational Courses" are made explicit.

- 1 - Grammatical points are presented situationally in sentence patterns, which show their function and meaning and which are arranged in carefully graded teaching order.
- 2 - Each new sentence pattern introduces only one

point of sentence structure.

- 3 - Aural-oral presentation and practice are immediately consolidated through reading and writing.

We can see from the above quotation that there has been a misunderstanding of the theoretical implications involved in the Situational Approach. As a result of this we were assailed by a number of text books which, in spite of being labelled "situational" were, in fact, very much structurally based. By structurally based, here, we mean courses which derive from a rigid linguistic (grammatical) syllabus, i.e., structures are chosen and presented to the student either through a progressive sequencing of linguistic patterns, ranging from the easiest items to the most difficult ones, or through visuals which, in turn, are used to contextualize the grammatical pattern chosen, ranging from the easiest items to the most difficult ones.

The following are examples taken from "Situational English". The teacher is supposed to introduce the pattern "I/HE/SHE/MUST..." He is advised to build up a situation to fit the linguistic pattern chosen:<sup>12</sup>

He has a sore throat. He must go to the doctor's.

She has no tea. She must go to the grocer's.

Suitable vocabulary:

(butcher's): no meat, no sausages etc.

(chemist's): no medicine, no soap etc.

Through the examples above, we infer that the criteria adopted by the supporters of what has been called the "Structural/Situational Approach" do not match strict situational principles. Here, the point of departure, when choosing the material to be taught, is not the situation itself, but the linguistic pattern to which it is relevant. The situation is there to justify the presentation of the

structure in question.

Many text-book writers have expressed their dissatisfaction with the strong emphasis on language teaching through a strictly Structural/Situational Approach.

These are concerns expressed by Maley and Duff in their introduction to "Drama Techniques in Language Teaching".<sup>13</sup>

"Much has changed in language teaching, but it is still true that the conviction that Vocabulary+Essential Structures+Language lies at the base of nearly every foreign language syllabus. Teaching on these lines takes account of only one aspect of the language - intellectual matter. But language is not purely intellectual matter. Our minds are attached to our bodies and our bodies to our minds. The intellect rarely functions without an element of emotion, yet it is so often just this element that is lacking in teaching material."

They criticize the lack of emphasis given, in traditional text-books, to skills such as adaptability, which, according to them, consists in the ability to match one's speech to the person one is talking to.

They also claim that when teaching foreign languages more attention should be given to meaning.

"Much language teaching is done through structures or so-called situations in the belief that once a sentence has been correctly formulated a use can always be found for it. First comes form, then meaning. This approach can be misleading, even dangerous, because it accustoms the learner to making his sentences fit into structural moulds".<sup>14</sup>

Another criticism is often made of the Structural/Situational Approach when it advocates that the language introduced in class must only be taught in and through situations that actually occur or are talked about in the classroom. Linguists base their criticisms on the grounds that as it is virtually impossible, in practical terms, to



carry out such a task, the Structural<sup>Situational</sup> Approach presupposes grading and we know by experience that it is impossible to do so in situations of every day life.

That most structurally/situationally based textbooks do not usually take the communicative facts of the language into account does not imply that "true situational courses" do not exist. According to Keith Morrow the "true Situational Approach does exist. Its main characteristics lie in the fact that the situation being the starting point for the teaching, the language taught is defined solely by criteria of what is appropriate to situation"<sup>15</sup>.

To exemplify such ideas we chose a situation "Offering cigarettes"<sup>16</sup>, in which several samples of language, relevant to this particular situation, have been chosen to illustrate it.

Situation: "Offering cigarettes"

Situation 1

- A - Cigarette?
- B - No, thanks. Not before lunch.
- A - Please, have one. It's a new brand.
- B - I honestly don't feel like one at the moment, thanks.

Situation 2

- A - Have a cigarette.
- B - No, I've just put one out.
- A - Please, do. I always seem to be smoking yours.
- B - Perhaps, I will then. Have you got a light?

Situation 3

- A - Would you like a cigarette?
- B - No, thanks. I'm trying to cut down.
- A - Go on. I owe you one from yesterday.
- B - OK, but next time you must have one of mine.

#### Situation 4

A - Help yourself to a cigarette.

B - No, thanks. I'm trying to give up.

A - Come on. I insist.

B - No really, thank you. I've got a bit of a cough.

If we analyse situations 1, 2, 3 and 4 we notice that despite the fact that the functional element, that of offering, expressed by A, is equal in the four situations, the linguistic representation is different in the four of them.

The main argument in favour of Situational syllabuses is that the learner and his needs will be taken into account. This represents a step forward, since this factor had not been emphasized in the organisation of earlier teaching materials. Till then, as we have seen, there was an unalterable correct procedure, regardless of the aim in learning a language.

#### 1.3.3 COGNITIVE APPROACH

According to Davies<sup>17</sup> there is a third way of envisaging the relationship between language and learning. Language and learning are seen as "interdependent and continually developing."

From this point on we shall try to analyse this view of language displayed in Davies' analysis, by attempting to outline briefly the main principles which underlie this novel theory of language acquisition. The supporters of this school, who have been called mentalists, claim that language is essentially "innovative and stimulus-free". Far from considering linguistic activity as a physical activity, they maintain the view that acts of language are mental.

The Mentalist or Cognitive theorists, whose most exponential figure is Noam Chomsky, advocate the principle that children are born with the potentiality of acquiring language, the capacity for learning being an innate property that all humans share. Since language is species-specific

i.e. only humans are able to communicate through it they argue that it cannot be considered as purely imitative behaviour. Hence the creative rather than imitative nature of language acquisition is emphasized. The strongest argument put forward by the Cognitive school against the views of language adopted by Behaviourists is manifested through the principle of creativity.

This third view of language can be better understood through Dakin's discussion of some of the mentalists' postulates.<sup>18</sup>

Dakin summarizes some of the main principles of this school of thought as far as the learning process is concerned. He points out that, according to Mentalists, there is the need for experience, which is a prerequisite for learning to take place, that is to say, the learner must be exposed to language. The new experience is assimilated and then it accommodates itself to new kinds of experience. In this process of accommodation the child will formulate his own rules, making accessible what was unclear to him. By doing so the child will be organising his linguistic repertoire, which will not only include sentences that have been heard before, but it will also involve the production of new sentences. This factor of paramount importance accounts for the creative aspect of language.

By providing this explanation of some of the principles advocated by Mentalists we hope to have made explicit what Davies meant by "interdependence between language and language learning" as well as what is meant by "the continual, developing process which involves language learning".

Chomsky himself saw no direct relation between his study of the nature of cognitive processes and language teaching, for during the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages he said:

"I'm frankly rather sceptical about the significance, for the teaching of languages, of such insights and understanding as have been attained in linguistics and psychology"<sup>19</sup>.

Further on he adds:

..."It is difficult to believe that either linguistics or psychology has achieved a level of theoretical understanding that might enable it to support a "technology" of language teaching.

Nevertheless, despite this pronouncement, we have to admit that these theoretical insights gave new light as far as classroom practice is concerned. The following are some of the practical outcomes which resulted from this view of language:

- a) Instead of repetition of intensive oral drills, the children must be given stories, as well as rhymes.
- b) Listening is vital to the learning process, since, in this way, Mentalists say, children will be provided with the necessary experience.
- c) Playing with language, as opposed to talking about language only. This is considered to be an important point. Consequently, activities such as role-playing, modelling and other meaningful activities have been encouraged.

Contrary to the Behaviourist's belief that grading is central to teaching, Mentalists advocate that the teacher should not stick too rigidly to it. This view is based on the assumption that "the material of language teaching should be extensive samples of natural language" and we all know from experience that natural language use does not involve strict procedures as to the selection and sequencing of structures.

The mastery of rules is a major concern of Mentalists. They think it dangerous to place too much emphasis on the production of automatic drills. The reason for the caution about their intensive use lies in the fact that very often the students fail to relate what they have learnt to a wider situation. Since the patterns they have been drilling exhaustively do not always fit the specific situation they are likely to face at a given moment, they may experience a certain feeling of disappointment in the method, thus hindering the learning process. The use of pattern practice together with a rough explanation of how the sentence works will help a lot, Mentalists say, thus avoiding hours of tedious repetition, in addition to being more profitable for the learner.

After having considered in what ways the Mentalist principles may have affected the general framework of language teaching, we shall provide a brief exposition of the "Indirect Method", whose procedures bear some resemblance to the "Grammar Translation Method". Some of the procedures advocated by the latter have returned to favour due to the Cognitive School\* of language. The Indirect Method<sup>20</sup> was put into practice in Wales and the material to be presented in the classroom was extracted from "A First French Book" by Whitmarsh.

This method is based on the assumption that effective learning takes place when children are stimulated to assume a conscious attitude towards learning. The learning of rules by which acceptable utterances are made has therefore been encouraged. According to its supporters the internalization of rules allows for the generative capacity of language.

The following are some of the features of the Indirect Method:

- a - The teaching of rules through the mother tongue.
- Since in deductive systems rules must be

\*"Cognitive" and "Mentalist" are used interchangeably in this chapter.

explicitly stated, when explaining them, the teacher is free to choose the native language if he finds it necessary to smooth the learning task.

- b - The teaching material is provided through texts. This procedure avoids a careful gradation of the linguistic items. These will be studied as they appear in the text.

These procedures are based on sound psycholinguistic principles. It is Jakobovits who points out that

..."the learner should be exposed to the full range of linguistic data from the beginning so as to give him maximum opportunity to test out inferences about the underlying structure of the language"<sup>21</sup>.

Insomuch as a conscious attitude towards the learning of rules is fostered the teacher's correction of the student's mistakes is encouraged. It allows the student, Mentalists say, to reformulate his hypothesis, thus making it possible to alter the learner's interim grammar.

Despite its great prestige among people who do not believe in a purely mechanist approach to teaching, on a stimulus-response basis, the Indirect Method proved to have a weakness; only the bright children could keep up with the intricate aspects of some grammatical points explained in class. For this reason another method was adopted, "The Bilingual Method", whose techniques were devised by C.J. Dodson of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.

It should be apparent from this brief explanation that the main objective of those who believed in the efficiency of methods such as these was to help the learner improve what has been called "linguistic or grammatical competence".

We shall begin Chapter two by developing the notion

of "communicative competence", since this concept is important for a better understanding of the theoretical implications which underlie the Notional/Functional Approach. Chapter two will indicate the main direction followed by the supporters of a fourth view of language: the shift of emphasis from structural completeness to communicative needs.

## 2.0 COMMUNICATIVE TEACHING

### 2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We finished the preceding chapter by proposing a discussion of the term "communicative competence". In order to do this effectively, we find it useful to consider first the notion of "competence" as Chomsky sees it. According to Chomsky<sup>22</sup> "competence" is what the speaker of a language knows implicitly. In his study of competence he emphasizes the discovery of rules used by the ideal speaker/hearer in a homogeneous society. He defines "competence" as a shared knowledge native speakers have which allows them to produce and understand all sentences in the language and reject all non-sentences. He also points out that the "competence of the speaker/hearer can ideally be expressed as a system of rules that relates signals to a semantic interpretation of those signals".

However, other linguists, more concerned with the social aspects of language, felt that Chomsky's formulation did not cover all the ground. Dell Hymes<sup>23</sup> and Campbell<sup>24</sup> reached the conclusion that grammatical competence needs to be augmented by what they refer to as "communicative competence". In addition to acquiring a set of syntactic and phonological rules, they suggest, the learner also needs to learn the rules of "sociolinguistic behaviour", so that he will be aware not only of correct usage but also of what is appropriate to the particular situation.

These ideas were very much in tune with the trends of the decade, which Bernard Lott describes as "... a shift of interest away from the study of language as a mechanist behaviour and towards that of the linguistic expression of social meaning".<sup>25</sup>

According to Halliday and Hasan<sup>26</sup> the concept of "context of situation" was formulated by Malinowski in 1923,



in his supplement to Odgen and Richards *The meaning of meaning*, and subsequently elaborated by Firth particularly in a paper written in 1950, called *Personality and language in society*.

Malinowski suggested that language is "a range of possibilities, an open-ended set of options in behaviour that are available to the individual in his existence as a social man".<sup>27</sup> The "context of situation" is then the environment of any particular selection that is made from within these options".<sup>28</sup> Firth took Malinowski's notion of "context of situation" and developed a theory of meaning which emphasizes the social function of language. He studied the significant and systematic patterns of social behaviour.

The notion of "context of situation" has been worked over and amplified by other linguists. Hymes<sup>29</sup> has added a further dimension in his work *Models of the interaction of language and social setting*. The implications of these views in the organization of teaching programmes will be studied in detail later on in this chapter.

Turning our attention, once again, to the notion of communicative competence we find it worthwhile quoting D.H. Hymes:

"...the child acquires a knowledge of sentences not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner..."<sup>30</sup>

Further on he adds that the "acquisition of such competency is, of course, fed by social experience, needs and motives"...

It seems that according to the supporters of these views of language, in order to provide the learner with the ability to communicate effectively, language instruction must proceed along two dimensions - together with the acquisition

of the language system, the learner must also control the conventions which govern the various ways of expressing social and cultural meanings.

Since the foreign speaker lacks this kind of competence, there has been a special concern with specifying what the components of communicative competence are, when devising a syllabus for the teaching of foreign languages. However, research carried out in this field has proved that providing the learner with communicative competence constitutes a difficult task.

Despite the fact that the learner has already reached an advanced stage of conceptual development in his own language, and this experience, we believe, will undoubtedly help him in the acquisition of the second, the conventions of use of the target language almost always differ from the ones in his native tongue.

From this point on we shall try to give an account of the main changes brought about by these novel ideas in the field of language teaching.

The first important aspect to consider is the shift of emphasis from the forms of language to the meanings which language conveys. Communicative teaching then focuses on the purposes that language serves. Consequently communicative teaching materials are organised with the aim of realizing the learner's immediate intentions. In other words, what the learner will need to express will be given priority. Considerations of how the speakers of the language express themselves, or when and where they use the language, will come as a consequence of what they have chosen to communicate through language.

Secondly, maintaining that to produce an utterance is to engage in a certain kind of social interaction, Hymes<sup>31</sup> points out that a theory of communicative competence must deal with notions of the speech community, speech situation, speech

acts, components of speech events, functions of speech, etc". We shall now turn our attention to "speech acts" and "functions of speech" to see to what extent these concepts have influenced the approach adopted by the supporters of communicative teaching.

The theory of "speech acts"<sup>32</sup>, developed by Austin, later became the title of a famous book written by Searle.

The theoretical basis which underlies the theory of Speech Acts<sup>33</sup> has its roots in studies made by Wittgenstein. The famous philosopher and logician came to the conclusion that the descriptive and emotive functions of language were not the ones to be taken into account and claimed, instead, the functional diversity of language utterances. He pointed out that "using language is playing games whose rules are learned and made manifest by actually playing the game"<sup>34</sup>. He went on to say that "one acquires the command of a language, not by first learning a single set of prescriptive rules which govern its use on all occasions, but by engaging in a variety of different language games, each of which is restricted to a specific kind of social context and is determined by particular social conventions". Austin's theory of speech acts and Wittgenstein's doctrine of language games have elements in common. The following are, according to Lyons<sup>35</sup>, two factors which prove this to be so: a) the awareness that describing and reporting are two among other important functions of language; b) the importance of relating the functions of language to the social context in which language operates.

Searle (*Speech Acts*, 1969) points out that sentences have two parts: a propositional element and a functional element: the functional element has been termed "illocutionary act".\* His views coincided with Austin's who had previously stated that nearly every utterance or speech act performed by

\* By "illocutionary act" he means an act performed in saying something, such as: making a promise, a request, etc.

a speaker has an "illocutionary force",\* i.e. it performs an act such as: "I warn", "I promise", etc. Moreover the illocutionary force of speech acts can also be identified even when they do not carry overt markers. In order to use language effectively the learner must know the conventions of use in the language. By conventions of use is meant the way we use language to perform speech acts such as apologizing, complaining, etc. That is to say, given a situation where we have to warn a person, in English, not to cross the street, because a car is coming at full speed, native speakers say "Look out!... a car is coming" and not "I warn you that a car is coming at full speed", for, in the English language, the conventions of use to mean "warn" are realized through linguistic forms such as "Look out"... "Mind"... and others.

Of course decisions on how to plan the content of language courses, as well as the way of arranging them, have been influenced by this way of envisaging language.

We shall now go on to examine how the theoretical ideas displayed determined, to a great extent, a new way of analysing pieces of language in real acts of communication, thus leading teachers to be more specific about the linguistic form and communicative function.

Let us suppose that the item selected to meet the learners' needs is "Suggestions on how to invite people to go to places". From a functional basis, the following procedure might be adopted: "Suasion" would be chosen as the broadest category from which "suggestion" is the speech act to be taught. For example:

SUASION

INDUCEMENT

SPEECH ACT                      SUGGESTING

REALIZATIONS                      I suggest that we go to the theatre  
    Shall we go to the theatre?

   Perhaps the play tonight is worth seeing.

\* By "illocutionary force" is meant its status as a promise, a request, etc.

It is worthwhile noticing that despite the fact that the meaning of the three utterances is the same, the linguistic realization in each is different in regard to both lexis and grammatical form.

In his article *Sociolinguistics and language teaching* Widdowson points out that:

..."in teaching a foreign language we have a tendency to assume an equation between linguistic form and communicative function and to teach language use purely in terms of the code. Thus learners are commonly misled into thinking that commands are uniquely associated with imperative sentences".<sup>37</sup>

Although, as we know, commands are often expressed through imperative sentences this is but one among the various ways of issuing a command in the English language.

Let us look at some samples of utterances that a mother might make when telling her daughter to do something for her:

"Mary, make the beds before going out". Alternatively she could have said:

"Are you going to make the beds before going out?"

"I hope you make the beds before going out".

Of course, in order that 2,3, and 4 act as commands certain conditions must apply. For "B" to understand that "A" is issuing a command it is necessary that the following conditions be fulfilled:

- a) It is desirable for X to be done
- b) A has the right to ask B to do X
- c) B has the obligation to do X
- d) B has the capacity to do X.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, as Widdowson points out, "the same linguistic form may also fulfil a variety of different

functions. The example below has been quoted from the article mentioned above:

- 1) Go away
- 2) Pass the salt, please
- 3) Bake the pie in a hot oven
- 4) Forgive<sup>44</sup> our trespasses
- 5) Come to dinner tomorrow
- 6) Invest in premium bonds

The different types of utterances have the same linguistic form since they are imperative sentences. Nevertheless, only number 1 is a command. The different meanings they convey show that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between these messages and their linguistic form. Here are, according to Widdowson, the different functions they assume:

- 1) Order
- 2) Request
- 3) Instruction
- 4) Appeal
- 5) Invitation
- 6) Advice <sup>39</sup>

So far we have considered examples of communication seen in isolation. We shall see the relevance of providing the learner with the means to understand the difference which exists between what is actually communicated within a larger spectrum of use: utterances put together thus forming a piece of discourse. Let us suppose that learners have been taught the propositional meaning of each of the sentences which compose this dialogue:<sup>40</sup>

Mary: "There is someone at the door."  
 Jane: "I'm in the kitchen."  
 Mary: "All right." \*

\* We are indebted for this kind of example to H.WIDDOWSON.

Taking linguistic competence into account these are said to represent, at sentence level, well-formed statements in the English language. Nevertheless, to acquire communicative competence the learner must go beyond sentence level and plunge into the domain of discourse. The dialogue above, despite its correctness, is an example of what seems apparently to be a disconnected piece of discourse. Although it lacks cohesion, if we try to analyse it in the light of the functional approach we shall discover that it is a coherent piece of discourse, in that number 1 is a covert request for Jane to go to the door and see who is knocking. On the other hand, number 2 functions as an excuse, as Jane is busy and consequently cannot comply, whereas number 3 indicates that Mary understands and accepts Jane's excuse, thus going herself to open the door, instead.

To transform this dialogue into a cohesive piece of discourse we would have to add some other pieces of information:

Mary: There is someone at the door. (Would you please go and see who it is?) - A declarative sentence functioning as a request.

Jane: (I can't) I'm (busy) (doing something) in the kitchen. - A declarative sentence expressing inability to comply

Mary: All right (Never mind, I'll go instead)

The examples below show that, in addition to knowing the phonological system and basic structural patterns which compose a given language, the learner must recognize the appropriate conditions which enable him to identify the illocutionary act of a given utterance. To accomplish this task successfully, the learner must be aware of the importance of interpreting the speaker's intention so as to respond appropriately:

Suppose X says:

"Isn't my yellow dress beautiful?"

Implication: X likes the dress she bought and  
expects Y to agree.

Possible reply if she agrees: "It's lovely".

Possible reply if she disagrees: "Well, why didn't you  
choose the red one?"

Suppose someone, in the course of conversation, exclaims: "I'm hot". To have grasped the utterance in its full complexity of meanings, we have to interpret it along two dimensions: we may see it as a complete correct grammatical sentence with a noun phrase, a verb and a meaning related to the hotness of the subject. Consequently we may interpret it as an appropriate or inappropriate utterance which merely predicates something about its subject. However, it could be seen as a covert request for a cold drink, or a suggestion for someone to open the windows, or an invitation to leave a stuffy room, and so on.

These examples show once more that using language communicatively involves the knowledge of factors outside a narrow view of linguistic manipulations.

## 2.2 FIRST STEPS TOWARDS FUNCTIONAL TEACHING

So far we have been discussing the general linguistic points that have characterized the new approach to language which caters for the functional diversity of language utterances, instead of concentrating only on language to report and describe things. As we shall see these attitudes favoured a change from a kind of teaching which emphasized a thorough knowledge of the structures of the language, to teaching concentrated on encouraging the learner to do things through it.

At this point we find it necessary to provide an account of what has been done in this field, i.e. we shall



have a brief retrospective look at how communicative teaching achieved its present state of development.

We have already seen that the awareness of the social nature of language led textbook writers to move away from a strict grammatical syllabus and to choose the linguistic forms according to certain features of the social environment. The first syllabuses constructed along these lines used situational labels instead of grammatical ones.\* Their search for providing the learner with the language which is appropriate in a given situation led to further studies to discover the exact rules of speaking used by natives. Another factor which contributed to the change of direction in foreign language teaching was the difficulty found in predicting the sort of language that the students would probably need to use in a given situation. Consequently after some practical experiments it was felt that situational courses are useful in situations of a particular type to provide the kind of language needed by an air-hostess or a hotel receptionist, etc. However, they proved to be ineffective in that the learner, being prepared to face situations in which very narrowly defined aims have been established, might be unable to handle language for unanticipated communicative purposes.

From this point of view we have to admit that providing the student with the structures together with a set of words carefully chosen to exemplify situations like going to the shoe-shop or the post-office is not enough. This is not indicative that the learner is prepared to communicate appropriately in those situations. He may have gone to the shoe-shop to complain about a mistake made by the shop assistant, in having given him the wrong pair of shoes. Similarly he may have gone to the post-office to express his gratitude to the clerk for having telephoned him to inform that his packet had arrived at last...

\* More details about the Situational Approach have been given on page 12 above.

To fulfil these gaps in teaching syllabuses a new way of approaching language learning which could take into account the basic communicative needs of the learner was then proposed: a syllabus that could cover the most important functions and concepts, chosen in accordance with the contents that learners would need to express, was the solution. By teaching the students those functions and notions which compose a given language, the supporters of these views of language say, we are providing them with a deeper insight into the language within a larger spectrum, thus enabling them to extend what has been learnt to any conceivable situation where that particular function or notion is required.

The first concrete step to facilitate the organisation of courses which took both linguistic code and the learner's specific communicative needs into consideration was taken by a group of experts - the Council of Europe team - who elaborated a document called *The Threshold Level*. The T.L. team made a successful attempt to define language course curricula based on the above criteria. The T.L. provides a "detailed specification of what the learner of a foreign language ought to be able to do with it, what feelings and notions he would need to express, or argue about."<sup>41</sup>

Among others these are the elements which compose their model for the definition of language learning objectives:<sup>42</sup>

- 1 - The situation in which the foreign language will be used, including the topics.
- 2 - The language activities\* which the learner will participate in.
- 3 - The language functions which the learner will fulfil.

\* These involve skills: speaking and understanding are given priority since the T.L. aims at providing the learner, primarily, with communicative ability.

- 4 - The general notions\*\* which the learner will be able to handle.
- 5 - The specific notions (topic-related) which the learner will be able to handle.

A major contribution to the elaboration of this document was made by the British linguist D.H. Wilkins. Together with his we find names such as Jan Van Ek, Renée Richtericht, John Trim and others.

The relevance of these ideas can be measured in terms of organisation of a language teaching programme based upon a prior analysis of the different uses we make of language. The most relevant study of the linguistic facts which underlie the new approach to language has been put forward by Wilkins. His ideas on semantico-grammatical categories and categories of communicative function have gained some currency since they were presented in the mentioned document. Later on in 1976 he published a book entitled *Notional Syllabuses*<sup>43</sup> in which he sets up an inventory of notional categories that could be drawn on by people intending to produce a syllabus on those lines.

### 2.3 NOTIONAL APPROACH

We have divided this chapter into three parts, the first one consisting of an exposition of the theoretical principles on which the advocates of communicative teaching based their novel experiments as to the nature of language. In the second part we examined how these theoretical views have been used by applied linguists so as to encourage the development of syllabuses which give priority to the semantic content of language, the selection of which must be closely related to the learner's needs. In the third part we shall provide an outline of the main points which make up the

\*\* By general notions they mean notions such as past/present; before/after, etc.

contribution of applied linguistics towards semantically-oriented language teaching. We chose as the basis of our enquiry into the Notional/Functional approach the work of Wilkins mentioned above, for it represents an important step towards the development of communicative teaching materials.

In his book Wilkins discusses the teaching strategies which language courses and syllabuses have been based on. Secondly he provides an explanation of the above-mentioned categories, and finally he discusses some of the operational and pedagogical implications that the adoption of a Notional/Functional theory seems to carry.

Wilkins distinguishes two ways of dealing with the organisation of teaching materials, and labels them as "synthetic" and "analytic" approaches<sup>44</sup>, which reflect different language learning strategies. While the former represents an attempt to divide the parts of language into sections, thus presenting the learner with bits of language, gradually - from the easiest items to the most difficult ones - the latter places emphasis on what the learner is going to "do" with language. Since the linguistic content of a course based on these ideas will depend on what the learner will need to express in terms of actual language behaviour, a careful gradation of linguistic items is not possible here. This approach is said to be "analytic" because, as Wilkins points out "since we are inviting the learner to recognize the linguistic components of the language behaviour he is acquiring we are, in effect, basing our approach on the learner's analytic capacities"<sup>45</sup>.

### 2.3.1 TYPES OF MEANING

Next Wilkins displays and exemplifies the framework which could be used in the setting up of a Notional/Functional syllabus. He presents three categories which embody general aspects of meaning and use. Wilkins distinguishes three types of meaning speakers convey when uttering a sentence: The "ideational meaning" - also called "cognitive" or

"propositional" - which we use to express our perception of events, processes, states and abstractions.<sup>46</sup> The "ideational meaning" is said to account for the internal grammatical relations. The sort of category used to express this meaning Wilkins calls "the semantico-grammatical category". Below are the semantico-grammatical categories listed by Wilkins.<sup>47</sup>

Time; Quantity; Space; Relational meaning; Deixis

He goes on to say that "while expressing his perceptions the speaker simultaneously expresses his attitudes towards what he is saying (or writing)"<sup>48</sup>. A statement may be represented as desired rather than positively asserted and so on... Wilkins has termed this kind of meaning, "modal meaning" or modality.<sup>49</sup> To express it several linguistic devices can be used: grammatical markers, as in the use of the modal in "It may be a good film"; lexical items, as in "It is possible that it will be a good film", different patterns of intonation, eg. the use of a low pretonic segment with tone 2 to express disapproval or concern.<sup>50</sup>

As to the categories of modal meaning, Wilkins draws two distinctions: the scale of certainty\*<sup>51</sup> and the scale of commitment.\*\*<sup>52</sup>

Relational meaning involves the identification of entities and the expression of relations between them; eg. In "John drank the wine", John is the agent, the animate entity carrying on the action represented by the verb".

By deictic meaning is meant the "capacity to refer an utterance to the context in which it occurs", eg: He lives in London and works there.

\* This scale involves the speaker's report to the likelihood of the predication being valid. Ex. "He is certain to be here" (impersonalized certainty) "I'm sure they will be here (personalized conviction).

\*\*This scale deals with that aspect of modality which enables us to report degrees of moral undertaking and responsibility. Ex: "I'll pick you up at the station" (intention) "He ought to stop and help"(obligation)

The third type of meaning is conveyed by what he calls "Categories of communicative function". These are considered to be important elements within the Notional/Functional teaching framework because they are intended to deal with the use of language: they express the social purpose of an utterance.

Wilkins recognizes six types of communicative functions, which according to him, represent "what we do through language"<sup>53</sup>. They are displayed as follows:

- a) Judgement and evaluation (Blaming, estimating, assessing)
- b) Suasion (Recommending, forcing, etc.)
- c) Argument (Conceding, informing, asserting, etc.)
- d) Rational enquiry and exposition (Drawing conclusions, comparing, defining, etc.)
- e) Personal emotions (Anxiety, delight, etc.)
- f) Emotional relations (Sympathy, hostility, gratitude, etc.)

A syllabus containing the three elements outlined above has been called a "Notional Syllabus". As we have seen it stimulates the expression of the social purposes of the utterance as well as of concepts or notions i.e. the meaning relations which the forms of language convey.

In adopting a Notional syllabus the text book writer will organise the teaching units according to language functions such as: greeting, warning, inviting and so on... These functions will be chosen according to the learner's needs. The selection will also contain the concepts or notions such: location, causation, etc. Each unit, in turn, covers the vocabulary and subject matter associated with the given concept. For example, concepts of motion and location are expressed by prepositions, whose classification is made according to the spatial/temporal and grammatical relationships they convey.

### 2.3.2 NOTIONAL SYLLABUSES: POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS.

After this brief review of the components which constitute the framework to be used in the elaboration of a Notional Syllabus, we shall move on to discuss its possibilities and limitations within the field of practical application in the light of Wilkins' thoughts. We shall see what is entailed in this novel approach, as well as considering the situations in which Notional Syllabuses might be most effectively used.

Wilkins defines a Notional Syllabus as "any strategy of language teaching that derives the content of learning from an initial analysis of the learner's need to express such meanings"<sup>54</sup>. But he asserts emphatically at the very beginning of chapter three: "Notional syllabuses as such do not, to my knowledge, exist"<sup>55</sup>.

Since the essence of a Notional approach is its close link to the learner's needs it is necessary to be more specific about the nature of his needs.

Wilkins draws a distinction between what he calls "Global courses"-the ones which aim at providing learners with a high level of proficiency in the target language-and "Special courses" i.e. language learning provided under conditions which differ from those normally found in schools. Here, the needs of the learners can be predicted in advance more accurately.

A structure for language teaching based on Notional principles is still tentative. However there are points which are considered to be relevant when creating Notional materials:

a) The need for a wider exposition of different types of meaning "so that the learner can adapt and combine the

different components of this knowledge according to the requirements of a particular act of communication"<sup>56</sup>.

b) The choice of the linguistic realization through which these meanings will be conveyed.

c) The situational factors which are relevant to that specific act of communication.

To produce a teaching programme in consonance with the elements mentioned above, course designers are confronted with difficulties. Wilkins begins by discussing issues that are likely to appear in connection with the application of Notional syllabus principles to global course designing.

To start with there is no one-to-one relationship between grammatical form and either grammatical meaning or language functions. Wilkins says that:

„The lack of congruence between form and meaning is most striking in the case of functional meaning, that is, in the use of sentences as utterances in actual acts of speech. An individual sentence can be used to perform any function in the language and consequently any function may take a variety of forms"<sup>57</sup>.

Wilkins illustrates the latter by listing fifty-three ways of asking "permission to use someone's telephone, from its easiest manifestations, such as "O.K.?" (accompanied by a gesture) to the most difficult ones "I should be most grateful if you would permit me to use your telephone"<sup>58</sup>.

How to overcome these issues then? Wilkins suggests an organisation of teaching materials based on a "cyclical approach", whereby the course designer introduces different realizations of the same notion. This is done progressively so that the learner might be able to enrich his semantic repertoire as the course progresses.



Since there exists such a large number of linguistic realizations, a pedagogic sequence is necessary. Wilkins suggests that before determining a pedagogic sequence "we would have to discover what it is that governs the speaker's choice from among these different forms"<sup>59</sup>. This selection is needed to cover not only stylistic aspects but medium as well. The former will include concerns such as:

- a) degree of formality
- b) degree of appropriateness
- c) degree of politeness

By analysing the following utterances chosen from the fifty-three presented by Wilkins: "All right?", "Can I use your telephone?", and "Would you be so kind as to let me use your telephone?", we find no difficulty in classifying the first as very informal, the second as neutral, and the third as most formal.

As for "medium" he points out that all fifty-three forms could be used in speech but some would not be possible in writing.

Wilkins highlights the importance of grammar, thus advocating the need for making the student acquainted with "the grammatical rules which underlie the production of utterances"<sup>60</sup>. Since grammar is so important how should a course producer introduce it? Does he consider first grammatical factors even if this choice turns out to produce inappropriate language\*\*, or does he decide on complex forms because they are more suitable stylistically and situationally?

\*\*Wilkins comments on the use of forms considered inappropriate by a native speaker. For example "I want to use your telephone" as a way of seeking permission.

To prepare the learner to manipulate the conceptual content of sentences is a difficult task. This is due to the fact that most times a semantic category involves several parts of the grammatical system. If we take, for instance, the semantico-grammatical category of "time" we realize that it may be expressed through several grammatical categories: adverbial phrases, as in "tomorrow morning"; verb tenses; prepositional phrases, as in "since Monday" etc. The concept of futurity, for instance, involves several verb forms (present, present continuous, shall/will+infinitive, to be+going to + infinitive, etc.) adverbs (soon), adjectives (following, next), nouns (future, successor, etc.) and so on...

On the other hand it has been observed that a single structure may convey a variety of concepts. Ex: the present continuous may express an action performed at the moment of speaking, future, habitual actions, and so on...

As Wilkins points out, "it is <sup>much</sup> more difficult to manipulate the conceptual content of sentences than the functional content. In any sentence several aspects of conceptual meaning are present simultaneously. It is therefore very difficult to isolate one kind of meaning"<sup>61</sup>. If we take, for instance, the utterance "John hasn't had coffee in here since 3 o'clock" we shall see that it involves knowledge of relational meaning, quantitative meaning, deictic meaning, as well as concepts of time duration.

Owing to all these difficulties Wilkins suggests alternative procedures when applying Notional principles. The one which he thinks to be the "weakest application" is that a grammatical course would be introduced in the early stages of learning and a functional one at more advanced levels. The "stronger application" is when the course designer would choose semantic criteria in the selection or ordering of grammatical items. He exemplifies it by saying that instead of organising a unit dealing with prepositions their "spatial", "temporal", and "grammatical" aspects would be presented so as to give the learner a clear picture of language in "use".

Organising global courses<sup>62</sup> based on Notional principles, as we have seen, presents difficulties to course producers. However, Keith Johnson says in an article entitled *The Application of Functional Syllabuses*<sup>63</sup>, that it is possible to use a Functional approach for general courses by developing the concept of common core. The suggestion has been given by the Council of Europe. As we have seen previously in this chapter they developed a teaching framework for the most general of audiences -average adult European learners . They pointed out that people, no matter what their professions or interests, would surely need English to perform such functions as greeting, thanking, refusing, inviting and so on... Based on this experience, Johnson says "wherever there is a common core a Functional approach can be used for general courses". On the other hand, Wilkins adds, Notional syllabuses can be more successfully used in "Special courses", i.e. in situations where the use is to be immediate and the needs of the learners more easily predicted. Wilkins lists four of them:

"High surrender value courses", created to meet the needs of foreign residents, emigrants, etc, where they need language for immediate use.

"Limited duration courses" which may last 10, 50, or even 200 hours and are intended for people who must acquire the maximum communicative skill within the minimum amount of time.

In the same article on the application of functional syllabuses, Johnson presents the existing strategies open to the teacher in such situations. Either to present the learner with part of the grammatical structures - the ones which happen to appear in the units being studied, or select the most important grammatical structures to use a Functional Approach, in which a restricted range of functions would be introduced.<sup>64</sup>

"Special purpose language courses", those whose

learners' objectives are narrowly defined. Among other things ESP courses are intended to provide learners with expertise in the most common features of their own particular discipline.

According to Wilkins, the Notional Approach is more suited to ESP courses because we know, in advance, the learner's desired terminal behaviour.

Finally he discusses the problem of "Remedial courses". Learners who have not been successful in their language classes often reject the possibility of repeating the units done previously. A Notional Approach might be suitable in that it offers the possibility of widening their scope of use. At the same time it might make up for the weaknesses in the grammatical field, by revising those items already taught, but this time within a semantic perspective.

Now, we go on to consider some practical suggestions given by Wilkins in the field of actual teaching.

Wilkins points out that Notional materials must be planned for both producer and receiver and continues by saying that the receptive repertoire given the learner must go beyond the level required in the productive one. This means that much greater attention must be given to the acquisition of "receptive competence". To cope with this demand for immediate use of language - which is a most important postulate of the Notional approach to learning - authentic language materials have been suggested as an important teaching device. Wilkins places particular importance on the application of these materials:

"The importance of incorporating such materials into courses is that they will provide the only opportunity that the learner will have to see the contrast between the somewhat idealized language that he is acquiring and the apparently deficient forms that people actually use to meet the forms of language current in speech and to develop the ability to understand language that he will never need to produce".<sup>65</sup>

Notional language teaching demands the use of novel strategies which exploit teaching materials in realistic settings by using utterances duly contextualized. "Role playing" constitutes a useful technique in that properly contextualized dialogues give the learner the opportunity to exercise language which is closely related to real life situations.

Among the supporters of the Notional/Functional approach we distinguish, among others, the names of Keith Morrow and Keith Johnson. They are members of the "Centre for Applied Language Studies" at the University of Reading. Their contribution to the field of communicative teaching is invaluable, insofar as they have tried to analyse the issues involved in the preparation of communicative teaching materials. At the same time they provide some practical suggestions for those who have decided to approach their teaching from a semantic point of view.

Morrow, in his article entitled *Syllabus design: some problems of putting theory into practice*<sup>66</sup>, points out, in an explicit way, some of the factors which have to be taken into account when organising teaching materials from the direction of meaning.

According to him some course designers will focus on the following aspects:

- 1 - The functions the learners will probably need to express their communicative needs.
- 2 - The topics they are going to deal with.
- 3 - The setting, or situations where the communicative act will take place.

He points out that the course producer will also give attention to the roles that the learner will have to play, his attitudes, the level of formality and to the degree of politeness. These, together with other factors such as age, sex, nationality, medium, varieties of language, social

background, etc. as all variables to be considered when adopting a Communicative approach to teaching.

He also calls our attention to the "need to reconcile the teaching of the grammar of language with the teaching of its uses".

Morrow's ideas on how to deal with grammatical concerns coincide with Wilkins' when he says that "the grammatical content should be specified in terms of concepts which the grammatical system expresses"<sup>67</sup>. In other words, the course writer must balance the provision of grammatical points needed by the learner with the Notional/Functional framework necessary to produce communicative language.

We have now given an indication of some of the aspects involved in the Communicative approach to teaching and in particular the features which compose the Notional syllabus. In the following chapter we shall examine textbooks whose writers claim to have adopted the Notional/Functional approach. We shall see to what extent their teaching materials have been organised to fit the parameters set by the supporters of this approach to language teaching.

### 3. ANALYSING NOTIONAL/FUNCTIONAL MATERIALS

#### 3.1 PROBLEMS INVOLVING THE APPLICATION OF NOTIONALLY BASED MATERIALS.

We noted in chapter two that Communicative teaching seeks to avoid the weaknesses of the Structural/Situational approaches and we also considered some of the fundamental principles of a Communicative approach, paying particular attention to the Notional/Functional theories expounded by Wilkins.

It is now time to consider the application of these theories to the practical task of producing a textbook for the teaching of English. Here it becomes immediately apparent that the task is not an easy one. A writer who chooses to adopt a purely Grammatical approach has several advantages: firstly there is a finite set of grammatical rules to deal with, secondly, and most important, much has already been done to smooth this path by the prior grading of grammatical structures according to such criteria as frequency of occurrence, range, availability, coverage, learnability and so on<sup>68</sup>. Indeed, a comprehensive description of English grammatical structures can be found in Alexander et al<sup>69</sup>. The writer attempting a Communicative approach enjoys neither of these advantages. There is as yet no consensus of opinion either as to the number of semantic categories or on ways of grading them. Stratton (1977) indicates a number of basic problems:

"There are several taxonomies but they all fail to provide an adequate model of language functions. All are incomplete and in many cases the categories are not in any sense mutually exclusive nor at the same level of analysis; secondly an attempt to apply any of the taxonomies to a speech situation requires a large number of subjective decisions on the part of the analyser. Also, although nearly all the taxonomists note that most utterances

are multi-functional none makes any attempt to describe how primary and secondary functions are assigned or determined. Finally none of the writers has been able to effectively deal with the very complex relationship which exists between the form of an utterance and the interaction of significant factors in the speech situation - the personalities of the interlocutors, their status and roles, the topics etc. which determines the function of an utterance.

Since too, as we have seen in the previous chapter, sentences may be multifunctional, there is the problem of selecting among the several structurally dissimilar linguistic realizations of a speech act. What criteria should one use when organising this material? To provide the learner with the easiest forms, or to introduce first the most common ones? (even if they are structurally more difficult?) Wilkins is very much aware of this dilemma:

"The problem that faces the syllabus constructor is to decide just *how much* weighting to give to grammatical criteria. Does he first decide which forms are stylistically and situationally acceptable and then order these on the lines suggested above, or does he pay greater attention to grammatical factors and allow these on occasions to lead him to introduce forms that are not really entirely appropriate from a stylistic or sociolinguistic point of view but which are comprehensible and do have certain grammatical advantages?"<sup>71</sup>

The second problem raised relates to the incompleteness of rules of use. Since they change from one culture to another an awareness of these rules on the part of the teacher is necessary, otherwise he will be inclined to rely too much on his intuition.

The considerations in the selectional procedures involved in the production of communicative teaching materials also include, apart from those factors pointed out by Morrow in the previous chapter, those of age, sex, nationality, medium, varieties of language etc.



These are just some of the problems which textbook writers may encounter in using a semantically-based syllabus. We can thus foresee that the use of such materials makes heavy demands on them for, as yet, the linguists themselves have not fully developed such a theory.

Nevertheless, no sooner had these ideas appeared on the language teaching scene than textbook writers started publishing books, claiming to have organised their materials around meaning, chosen in accordance with the learner's needs. Consequently we have seen over the last five years an increasing number of books claiming to be based on these novel ideas. Of course, we are not by any means questioning here the validity of adopting the trend of communicative teaching, for it would be foolish to deny its importance in the present-day panorama of language teaching. However, after having considered the main theoretical principles advocated by its supporters, together with a rapid view of how these principles have been reorganised into a syllabus based on functions and notions which language serves, we find it necessary to ask the following questions: do the so-called Notional/Functional books, available now on the market, represent a real revolution in the field of foreign language teaching? If so, in what ways? Do they really provide the learner with the necessary tools which will enable him to fulfil his communicative needs?

It is perhaps appropriate at this stage to quote claims made by textbook writers who purport to adopt a Notional/Functional approach, and we have selected for this purpose two books which differ considerably in content and presentation. Both, however, stress the radical nature of their break with tradition. They are *Say what you mean in English* by John Andrews<sup>72</sup>, a slim volume of 146 pages, and *Starting Strategies* by Abbs & Freebairn<sup>73</sup>, a lavishly illustrated 134 page book, containing a print-out of all the recorded material, available on a set of tapes or cassettes.

The following are extracts taken from the books in

question:

Andrews begins by deploring the frustration experienced by both learners and teachers when confronted by textbooks which fail to provide the learner with communicative competence, then adds:

"This book makes some bold departures from traditional practice: it rejects the concepts of a purely grammatical syllabus which isolates grammatical forms and presents them in a carefully graded system of what is thought to be ascending order of difficulty. It also attempts to get away from the so-called situational approach which has been much in vogue, but which is often, in fact, little more than a grammatical syllabus served up in more palatable morsels. The book presupposes the existence of a number of notions which we all need to express either in our own language or in another; these notions are limited neither by grammatical formula nor by vocabulary. They generate certain structures which language employs to express them; and these structures or patterns, though connected in meaning may be unrelated grammatically. The structures need, of course, to be illustrated in use, and so illustrative situations are provided but these can be simplified, altered or added to as the teacher and the learner feel the need. Thus the notion, the structures and illustrative situation dictate the necessary vocabulary".<sup>74</sup>

He goes on to say that "the other major assumption made is that the language learner can absorb, digest and subsequently reproduce complete utterances without deep analysis or understanding of their grammatical structure".<sup>75</sup>

For their part Abbs & Freebairn announce that:

"*Starting Strategies* presents a totally new approach to language learning for students as it takes account of basic communicative needs as its first priority. The materials have been carefully planned in order that the beginner can immediately see the relevance to him/herself of what is being learnt... Spoken and written language is introduced by means of authentic reading and listening practice from the very beginning."<sup>76</sup>

These are indeed bold claims, and it will be part of our task to establish the extent to which the material contained in these textbooks actually lives up to them. It will be immediately apparent that Andrews is somewhat less cautious than Abbs and Freebairn. His notions are said to be "limited neither by grammatical formula nor by vocabulary" whereas Wilkins himself urges the need to select the grammatically simpler realizations of the various notions in the early stages except where this would affect the appropriateness of the utterance.

On the other hand, Abbs & Freebairn stick fairly closely to Wilkins' suggestions, as the following quotations, taken alternately from Abbs & Freebairn and Wilkins, show:

"Starting Strategies... takes account of basic communication needs as its first priority".<sup>77</sup>

"The essence of a Notional syllabus will be the priority it gives to the semantic content of the language learning".<sup>78</sup>

"...Spoken and written language is introduced by means of authentic reading and listening practice".<sup>79</sup>

"An important feature of materials designed to meet such a competence would be authentic language materials".<sup>80</sup>

The remainder of this chapter will thus be devoted to an attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

1) Do these books really differ radically from more traditional, structurally-based textbooks in the way suggested by Wilkins and others?

2) Do they have pedagogic validity? That is to say, are they likely to be successful in achieving what they set out to do?

We shall attempt to answer the first question by

measuring the content and presentation of each book against the requirements of Notional/Functional theory. The answer to the second question can at best be only tentative, as the success of any book may really only be measured over a long period of time involving its use with a variety of classes and teachers, with other variables taken into account. Nevertheless it should not be difficult to determine whether or not the books conform to the general criteria laid down for textbooks by such universally acknowledged experts as W.F. Mackey and Wilga Rivers. As Mackey points out, for example:

"All teaching, whether good or bad, must include some sort of selection, some sort of gradation, some sort of presentation and some sort of repetition. Selection, because it is impossible to teach the whole field of knowledge; we are forced to select the part of it we wish to teach. Gradation, because it is impossible to teach all of what we have selected at once, we are forced to put something before or after something else. Presentation, because it is impossible to teach without communicating or trying to communicate something to somebody. Repetition because it is impossible to learn a skill from a single instance; all skill depends on practice".<sup>81</sup>

There are several possibilities then. Either or both books may do exactly what they claim, in which case they will represent a distinct advance in the methodology of language teaching. Failure to achieve this will be measurable on a cline, at one extreme of which we might expect to find a normal structurally-based textbook masquerading as something new and at the other extreme a simple phrase book, of the type which, as Wilkins points out, allows the user to ask the way but does not provide him with the means of understanding the answer.

### 3.2 PRACTICAL ANALYSIS OF TEXTBOOKS

Our first step must be to break down the two main queries into a series of smaller, more manageable and fairly specific questions and attempt to provide equally specific answers to them by detailed reference to each of the textbooks

under analysis. The following questions would appear to be appropriate:

- 1) What level of student are the books aimed at (Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced etc.) and what are the criteria used to justify the appropriateness of the material for this level?
- 2) Are the books aimed at students seeking a knowledge of "General English" or at those requiring the language for<sup>a</sup> specific purpose, such as the pursuit of advanced studies in another discipline? How does the selection of the material reflect this?
- 3) How much emphasis is given to each of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing?
- 4) Have the authors taken steps "to ensure that the grammatical system is properly assimilated by the learner?
- 5) Have situational and grammatical considerations operated at selectional level or presentational level?
- 6) How is the material graded? If semantically, have the authors offered any criteria for the grading of notions, functions, topics etc.?
- 7) Are the items which compose the various units likely to lead to the fulfilment of the learner's immediate communicative needs?
- 8) Is the language which composes the units representative of authentic stretches of normal conversation?
- 9) Is the main linguistic unit presented to the learner the sentence? If so, have the sentences been organised so as to provide cohesive and coherent

pieces of discourse? Are we (in Widdowson's terms) offered examples of "use" or merely "usage"?

We shall discuss the questions in the order presented above.

### 3.2.1 LEVEL OF STUDENT

To justify the appropriateness of any teaching material, we first have to take into account the learner's needs. Apart from those who want to learn English to fulfil certain specific needs such as translating, listening to lectures and taking notes, using library facilities so as to carry out research in their field of work, etc, foreign language learners- whatever their level of knowledge- will be people who want to develop skills which enable them to communicate effectively in the target language.

As communicative interchange is a central concern of a given group of learners, when producing communicative materials for beginners, textbook writers are often faced with problems of combining successfully simple structures with the functions and notions that will serve the student's needs at early stages. Similarly, attention must be given to the length of the stretches of speech chosen to compose the content of the book.

When observing the criteria used by Abbs & Freebairn to classify *Starting Strategies* as a book intended for beginners, we found some characteristics which are, to our mind, important in the preparation of Notional/Functional based materials.

The following are the main aspects detected:

a) Simplicity in the choice of the grammatical

structure\*

b) Stretches of speech shortened so as to facilitate the learner's task

In order to exemplify what has just been pointed out we might consider unit 10 in *Starting Strategies*.<sup>82</sup>

Item "a": A look at chart number 1 will show the author's concern for introducing simple linguistic items throughout the book.

Item "b" will be analysed in the light of the material displayed in unit 10. We shall present the material which composes the dialogue in a twofold version: Format 1, which represents the actual material used by Abbs & Freebairn and Format 2 which may serve as an example of how the same material could be developed into more complex material so as to attain to intermediate levels of learning.

FORMAT 1 (beginners)	FORMAT 2 (intermediate)
A - Inviting someone to go out	A - Urging someone to go out
B - Accepting the invitation	B - Accepting the invitation
A - Showing places	A - Showing places
B - Expressing admiration	B - Expressing enthusiastic admiration
A - Offering	A - Offering
B - Accepting	B - Accepting gratefully
A - Offering	A - Offering
B - Refusing	B - Refusing politely but firmly

\*Of course selectional procedures carried out by Notional/Functional textbook writers are much more flexible than the ones used by traditional approaches. Nevertheless, as it is impossible to teach the whole of the language in one level, it is reasonable (and even necessary) at the beginner's level to select those pieces of language which present less complexity as far as the grammatical structure is concerned.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A - Jackie! It's coffee time!            | A - Get a move on, Jackie.<br>It's coffee time!                        |
| B - Coming!                              | B - Coming!  |
| A - Well this is the cafeteria.          | A - Well this is the cafeteria.  |
| B - It's nice and modern.                | B - How nice! It's absolutely<br>super.                                |
| A - Would you like a cup of<br>coffee?   | A - I expect you could do with<br>a cup of coffee.                     |
| B - Yes, please.                         | B - Thanks I'd love one.   |
| A - And a biscuit?                       | A - How about a biscuit?   |
| B - No, thanks, just a cup of<br>coffee. | B - If you don't mind I'd<br>rather not. I have to<br>watch my weight. |

As we can see from the exposition above, format 1, used in *Starting Strategies*, is more appropriate for beginners, for in addition to fulfilling the communicative functions intended for the unit in question, the linguistic items chosen, if compared to format 2, present less complexity as far as the grammatical structure is concerned.

We can conclude by saying that the material displayed in *Starting Strategies* can be said to be appropriate for beginners since both simplification and communicative value have been taken into account.

"Say what you mean in English" is intended for the "adult foreign learner" and according to its author it sets out to teach "the learner to communicate in English even at elementary level".<sup>83</sup>

Getting down to the actual analysis of the teaching material in Andrew's book we observe that:

- a) The structures which compose the grammatical backbone of the course in question will immediately show that the author makes little attempt to select structurally simpler realizations of the notions introduced.<sup>84</sup>



b) As far as the length of utterances is concerned, we found no evidence of the author's concern to introduce short stretches of language, in order to make the learner's task easier. The following are some examples extracted from the book:

"She will tell him when she's done the others".<sup>85</sup>

"If she doesn't mind the step she'll fall down".<sup>86</sup>

"She wants to know what he thinks of the wallpaper".<sup>87</sup>

Since this book aims to teach foreigners "even at elementary level", we found it difficult, in the light of considerations "a" and "b" (see page 52-53 in this chapter) to accept that it is particularly suited to its purpose.

### 3.2.2 GENERAL OR SPECIFIC ENGLISH?

*Starting Strategies* seems to have been oriented to those who are interested in knowing something about British culture. This can be detected through the cultural aspects which have been chosen to compose its units, for example<sup>88</sup>: English money, four o'clock tea with lemon, extracts taken from English newspapers on how to let flats, or to look for jobs... We can also find information, which is usually given by travel agencies, on how to spend holidays in a very typical way: by travelling to "warm" resorts etc. not to speak of amusements such as concerts, festivals, art galleries, places which the British visit at weekends, etc.

Thus the distinctly British cultural background noted above does seem to suggest that the book would be particularly useful for people intending to visit Britain for an extended period, either to take a course of study or to obtain work there. This places it in the category of "Special English" as familiarity with, for instance, newspaper advertisements for flats and job opportunities are distinctly more relevant to visitors to Britain than to students of general English who may never leave their own country.

From Wilkins' point of view this would be very satisfactory as

..."it is doubtful whether global (general courses) provide the most effective field of application of the Notional approach. In the first place the needs of the learners are in practice hard to define; secondly, for most of the learners the opportunity actually to use language may be long deferred".<sup>89</sup>

However, there is no evidence whatsoever that the authors intended the book for such a restricted audience. On the contrary, all the indications are that *Starting Strategies* is intended as a global course, suitable for any type of learner. It is readily available, for instance, in Brazilian bookshops and has been adopted by a number of language schools in this country. This points to a number of anomalies. As the book deals specifically with those aspects of English life with which overseas students, living in Britain, would need to become familiar, much of it would be irrelevant to those not intending to leave their own countries. Moreover, the nature of the content demands that the teacher is himself familiar with the social assumptions shared by the young professional group featured in the book, and by English people in general. It is unlikely that the majority of teachers in any country would have this background.

"*Starting Strategies* is a new beginners' course for students aged 14 or over. It can be used for complete beginners and false beginners who need a new approach.

"The materials have been very carefully planned in order that the beginner can immediately see the relevance to him/herself of what is being learnt".<sup>90</sup>

The explanatory comments on the back cover of the book reinforce this view, emphasizing that the book is intended for complete or "false" beginners aged 14 or over,

stressing the novel approach and the immediate relevance of the material to the learner.

It would appear that although *Starting Strategies* might be an extremely useful textbook for overseas students at language schools in Britain, or as a preparatory course at a good overseas language school with near native speaker teachers, for those intending to study in Britain, it cannot be said to meet the requirements of the general learner at whom it appears to be aimed.

There was no evidence in *Say what you mean in English* of the same concern for cultural matters, nor is there any indication of the specific purpose of the course, other than to permit the learner to "absorb, digest and subsequently reproduce complete utterances without deep analysis or understanding of their grammatical structure."<sup>91</sup> We can only surmise therefore that the book also falls into the category of "global" courses and thus again encounters the difficulties suggested by Wilkins above.

### 3.2.3 EMPHASIS GIVEN TO EACH OF THE FOUR SKILLS

As we have already mentioned, the changes brought about by the different attitudes towards language have led to a broader understanding of the rules which govern foreign language teaching. Until very recently speaking was given overriding importance, the other skills being considered of less importance within the learning process. Nowadays we are experiencing a broadening of view on the subject. It is felt that great attention should be paid to the purposes for which language is being studied. Consequently, writers of textbooks for communicative teaching, besides giving emphasis to the spoken mode, have also accounted for the necessity of including communicative writing materials in their books. By naming them this way we want to draw a distinction between written materials which aim at developing particular communicative skills and those which aim at providing the learner with the opportunity to practise certain structures

for the sake of reinforcing them.

We shall now proceed with our analysis of the two books to see to what extent communicative concerns have been taken into account as far as writing tasks are concerned.

Since the book *Say what you mean in English* covers "essentially spoken material", the learner being called upon to perform tasks such as listening, speaking and looking at things, no attention is paid to the development of skill in writing.

Conversely *Starting Strategies* claims to provide the learner with both speaking and writing tasks.

Despite the emphasis given to speaking, Abbs & Freebairn seem to give writing a reasonable degree of importance within the general organisation of the book.

The following are some of the writing strategies developed by the book:<sup>92</sup>

- 1 - Filling in forms to apply for a job.
- 2 - Filling in telegrams.
- 3 - Completing open dialogues
- 4 - Filling in application forms for someone to have the right to participate in a given activity.
- 5 - Completing registration forms for a place (hotel) to stay in England.
- 6 - Filling in an application form for a flat agency.
- 7 - Listening to recorded material and filling in sentences on the subject given.
- 8 - Writing letters.
- 9 - Writing down information from a tourist information office.
- 10 - Writing informal notes to a friend.
- 11 - Writing postcards.
- 12 - Writing diaries.
- 13 - Writing notes accepting or refusing invitations

- 14 - Filling in the information on surveys
- 15 - Writing notes about graphs.
- 16 - Making reports -
- 17 - Filling in dialogue gaps.

These are some of the writing tasks presented by the book, which to our mind will help the learner fulfil his/her communicative needs in a more effective way. So it would seem that in this respect the book adheres to Notional/Functional theory.

Having focused on the various written materials developed by the book we shall analyse the treatment given to listening materials.

Since the receptive skill is considered to be of great importance in the preparation of communicative teaching materials we shall see whether the books cater for providing students with an effective capacity to participate in real language events, by exposing them to a varied range of listening materials in earlier stages of learning.

Wilkins emphasizes the fact that a communicative act implies both producer and receiver, the latter becoming the former in the course of the interactional process.

As we have already pointed out, the concerns for productive skills have, at times, been overemphasized, thus production being considered the only aspect which is really important in the foreign language learning process. Nevertheless, as Wilkins says, "by focussing on the receiver we are obliged to consider the content and purpose, not only of the utterance that he/she may produce, but of those he/she may hear".<sup>93</sup>

Besides emphasizing the role of productive skills, notionally based courses aim at developing the learner's ability to understand the complex language used by native speakers. This is to be achieved by exposing the learner to

recorded materials so as to provide him/her with receptive competence. These materials should be extracted from texts directed at native-speaking audiences, be they written or recorded materials.

In order to assess to what extent the two books which are the object of our study have followed the communicative teaching principles displayed above, we will have a look at the treatment given by them to receptive skills.

In *Starting Strategies* we observe that the recorded material available is organised in very traditional way, in that the learner is given the opportunity to listen to samples of situations, which have been previously exploited in a given unit.

If we take, for instance, unit 13, whose title is "Train to Coventry", we can see that the recorded material is entirely based on the dialogue already learnt. The following are the dialogue and the material chosen to serve as the basis for listening practice for the lesson.

Murray, Neville and Jackie go to Coventry to *make* a film:

Murray: Three to Coventry, please.

Man : Single or return?

Murray: Return, please.

Neville: Hurry up, Murray! It's late. It's ten past nine!

Murray: What time does the train leave?

Jackie: It leaves at twenty past nine.

Murray: Which platform does it leave from?

Jackie: Platform nine. It's over there.

Murray: All right. Let's go.

On page 74, the student is provided with listening practice based on the introductory dialogue of unit 13.

"Listen to the tape and answer these questions:

- 1 - What time does the Manchester to London train leave?
- 2 - What platform does it leave from?
- 3 - What train is arriving at platform 10?

As we can see, the questions imply that the text chosen for the student to listen to is based on dialogues previously learnt. The same procedure is used throughout the book, which indicates that the learner is given a receptive repertoire which does not go beyond the limits of the productive repertoire desired.

Despite the fact then that Abbs & Freebairn have adhered fairly closely to traditional techniques in some aspects, it seems nevertheless fair to observe that they have paid equal attention to all four skills.

#### 3.2.4 ASSIMILATION OF GRAMMATICAL SYSTEM.

In an article entitled "Learner language and teacher talk" Pit Corder points out that "learners do not develop their grammar in a particular way because they encounter copious examples of a particular form of structure".<sup>94</sup> Since the native learner has total exposure to language the acquisition of structures occurs in a natural and varied way. Thus advocates of communicative teaching suggest a more varied exposition of the language structures, instead of extensive practice of related sentences arranged to drill a given structure. The latter procedure has been largely exploited by traditional structurally based textbooks.

We have already seen, in chapter two, that Notional syllabuses advocate an organisation of materials based on the propositional content so as to broaden the scope of the learner's use.

Having in mind the theoretical principles of the two trends in teaching, the following appear to be two possible ways of approaching the subject.

a) To select structures by taking into account the propositional meaning. This means that a single meaning may be conveyed through a variety of linguistic realizations (one meaning - several linguistic realizations).

b) To select samples of related sentences so as to provide students with plenty of practice\* of one and the same structure, which has been chosen to convey a certain meaning (one structure, one meaning).

However, since communicative-based books appeared on the market as late as 1975 it is too early for us to compare the effectiveness of such procedures. For the time being we venture to point out some of the advantages that the former will probably have over the latter:

a) It will possibly prevent students from identifying a given structure with a determined meaning.

b) It will be challenging and motivating, since it does not require repetition of the same structure.

c) The selected material can be organised in a cyclical way, i.e. the different linguistic realizations may reappear in later units and be extended to other topics and

\* It should be pointed out that we are not referring here to activities devised by the teacher for the student to practise a structure taught, for practising it would be a necessary step in both approaches, the effectiveness of which would depend on the teacher's ingenuity. What we are referring to here, is the content of the course. In other words, how the items which compose a given teaching programme are to be organised so as to meet the communicative needs of the learner in the most effective way. In other words, what we are interested in is to know what we select to teach not how we shall teach it.



situations so as to cater for generalization. This also implies repetition, but this time it will be taken in a broader sense. It is meaning which is being reinforced not the structure itself.

To make more explicit what we have been discussing so far, we shall give two practical examples of the various ways in which to approach the subject.

Let us suppose we are introducing people and talking about their nationality. Example one, below, shows how a functionally oriented text-book would probably select the material to be covered. On the grounds that it would be more profitable for the student to learn several instances of the same meaning, he would probably be required to learn the following realizations:

- a) Where are you from?
- b) What nationality are you?
- c) Where were you born?
- d) Where do you come from?

Of course, the way the items would be displayed throughout the book would depend on its internal organisation.

These would be, to our mind, alternative questions which would provide the student with a wider range of uses.

The second way of dealing with the subject has been the one used by traditional structurally graded books, which drill instances of the same structure instead.

Since our job here is to investigate to what extent the two text books in question have been faithful to the principles advocated by the supporters of communicative teaching, we shall now quote an example from *Starting Strategies* (Unit 7, p.39).

"Where are you from? I'm from London"

"Where is Peter from? He's from Liverpool", and later

"Are you from London? No, we aren't".

"Are you from Sidney? No, we aren't".

"Are you from Liverpool? No, we aren't".

If we go further we shall see that *Starting Strategies* makes extensive use of drills in much the same way as the one shown above, thus following well-established structurally-based course techniques.

Turning our attention to *Say what you mean in English* we have found it difficult to establish what criteria the author has used to select his material. Nevertheless it is clear that he also follows traditional courses in that he chooses a given structure and drills it repeatedly. Contrary to *Starting Strategies*, whose presentation comes in a more natural way, as its authors use short dialogues to introduce the main content of each unit, *Say what you mean in English* introduces structures separately, the aim of which is clearly defined: to drill one single structure at a time: Example three has been quoted from unit 2, p. 12.

"She needs an umbrella".

"She needs a new car".

"She needs an alarm clock".

"She needs a drink".

"She needs a good book".

"She needs a loud voice".

It appears therefore that both textbooks are concerned to reinforce the grammatical system in so far as this may be achieved by practice with dialogues and drills. This is not all that is required however. As Wilkins points out, there is the problem of

..."how to overcome undue fragmentation of the units at any one level. A series of linguistically and thematically unconnected units may appear lacking in coherence to the learner, especially in the case of low intensity

courses. As in existing courses this coherence might be provided by the introduction of a story line".<sup>95</sup>

The "linguistically unconnected units" referred to might well lead not only to lack of "coherence" but to inability to assimilate the grammatical system properly, to say nothing of the effect on motivation. We must therefore analyse our sample textbooks from this angle also.

Although we feel that a strong story line may sometimes act as a motivating factor for students, since it gives a sense of continuity to what is being learnt, we cannot obscure the fact that it might, sometimes, lead to a certain rigidity as to the order of presentation, i.e. by not sticking too rigidly to a story line, it will be easier for the teacher to select those units most likely to be of interest for a given group of learners. Secondly, when dealing with books which introduce a story line students often read through the whole story ahead of schedule ending up by becoming bored with it, thus this procedure affects the normal development of the learning process.

*Starting Strategies* begins by presenting us with a group of people from a company called "Focus Films". It does not constitute a strong narrative. Abbs & Freebairn introduce what we might call a "loose" story line, in so far as the characters share the same situations throughout the book. Although these situations may happen sometimes to be in sequence there is nothing which makes it difficult for some to be left out or altered.

Andrews does not make any attempt to incorporate the linguistic units chosen to such techniques, thus displaying sets of sentences which might as well be considered as samples of "linguistically unconnected units" mentioned by Wilkins.

### 3.2.5 SITUATIONAL AND GRAMMATICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before setting out to analyse whether grammatical and situational considerations have been applied at a selectional level or at a presentational level we shall quote Carmen Silva, who expresses concerns about the selection of contents of courses designed to teach English as a foreign language:

"The starting point when selecting the content of foreign language courses semantically based, would involve asking the question: what are the notions that the language learner will be called upon to express through the target language? The answer for it, firmly rooted in a semantic study of the functions of language, will give us a guideline for the selection of our teaching materials. This approach will allow important grammatical and situational considerations to continue to operate, though not at the selectional level, but at the presentational level. We will limit the linguistic content of courses on the basis of grammatical structures or situations, but they will be tools in the service of the learner's needs".<sup>96</sup>

We chose unit 2 in *Say what you mean in English* to carry out an analysis of the criteria used by the author in the organisation of the teaching material. The following is the arrangement made by the author:

"Needs" is the semantic choice of unit 2, whose title is represented linguistically by means of a grammatical structure: "Do you need one?"

It seems to us that the author has approached the subject by using the following procedure: First he isolates a grammatical pattern, then he illustrates it through various situations, chosen more or less haphazardly. The structure is contextualized through pictures which show clearly what is going on with the characters in question:

1 - She needs an umbrella.

- 2 - He needs a new car.
- 3 - He needs an alarm clock.
- 4 - He needs a drink.
- 5 - He needs good boots.
- 6 - He needs loud voice.

Secondly he describes\* the picture in order to achieve a full contextualization of the structure to be taught.  
Ex:

Look at picture 1.  
The lady is not happy. It's raining.  
She's getting wet. She needs an umbrella.

Next, the same structure is taken and presented once again, this time, however, contextualized by means of linguistic devices\*\*. Ex.

He's asleep. It's late. He needs an alarm clock.  
He's hot and thirsty. He needs a drink, etc.

In the example just given part one acts as a stimulus in order that the structure intended "He needs a..." might be produced more or less automatically.

Having analysed the content of unit two in its functioning, we came to the conclusion that *Say what you mean in English* uses the Structural/Situational approach, not only at the presentational level but also and primarily at the

\*A major part of material in *Say what you mean in English* is presented through descriptive language, which according to the supporters of a Notional approach to language, should not comprise the bulk of communicative based text books.

\*\*The same type of exercises can be found in the book entitled *Situational English*, a course adapted by the Commonwealth Office of Education, Sidney, Australia.

selectional level.

The following considerations are an attempt to justify what we have just said about unit two:

- a) The author chooses a structure and keeps repeating it throughout the unit so as to reinforce it.
- b) The material has been dealt with at sentence level thus hindering the possibility of carrying out real communication.
- c) The situations seem to be contrived so as to drill the structure chosen.

Let us now consider how the points discussed above have been dealt with in *Starting Strategies*.<sup>97</sup>

Unit 11 is intended to teach students how to express "likes and dislikes". The subject has been introduced through a grammatical structure: "Do you like tea, with lemon?" being the title of this unit. The subject is presented through a short dialogue in which the characters express their likes and dislikes, by using spontaneous talk:

Neville: "What's the time Maria?"

Maria : "It's four o'clock. Would you like a cup of tea?"

Neville: "Mmm! yes, please"

Maria : "Do you like tea with lemon?"

Neville: "Yes, I do"

Maria : "Oh, good. Here you are... Sugar?"

Neville: "Yes, please"

Maria : "Mind the cup!"

Neville: "Oh! sorry!..."

Maria : "That's all right. I'll get a cloth. Let's have some music. Do you like Rita Hamilton?"

Neville: "Yes, she's all right"

Maria : "Well, I like her. I think she's very good."

After the content of the lesson has been introduced through the dialogue above, instances of the same structures are displayed throughout the unit in a traditional way:

"Do you like Frank Sinatra? He's all right"  
 "Do you like Elisabeth Taylor? She's all right"  
 "Do you like the Rolling Stones? They're all right"  
 "Do you like small dogs? They're all right"  
 "Do you like classical music? It's all right"  
 "Do you like whisky? It's all right".

And later on:

"Does he like tea with milk? Yes, he does"  
 "Does he like black coffee? No, he doesn't"  
 "Does he like coca-cola? He thinks it's all right"  
 "Does he like jazz? Yes, he does"  
 "Does he like classical music? No, he doesn't"  
 "Does he like Frank Sinatra? He thinks he's all right".

Although both books use familiar principles associated with the Structural approach to teaching it seems to us that *Starting Strategies* has its material organised so as to provide the learner with a wider exposure to meaningful language.

It seems to us that the authors use situational factors as a tool to cater for a better contextualization of the teaching material.

Despite the positive aspects mentioned above we found it difficult to detect to what extent grammatical considerations have been given priority over use. Since the notions "likes and dislikes" are often realized through the verb "like" it is difficult to recognize whether grammatical considerations have operated at a selectional or at a presentational level.

### 3.2.6 GRADING OF MATERIAL

In unit 9 (p. 47-53), Abbs & Freebairn introduce "How much is it?", whereas in unit 18 (p. 101-107) the same meaning is introduced through a more complicated structure "How much does it cost?" We also observed that a single structure has been chosen to signify three instances of meaning:

Units 10 - 11 (p. 54-56) - Offering things: "Would you like a cup of tea?"

Unit 14 (p. 76-82) - Asking what people would like to do: "What would you like (to buy)?"

Unit 17 (p. 95-100) - Inviting people "Would you like to go to the cinema?"

This represents an important step, since it will give the learner new insights into the target language, even at elementary levels. In addition to this the student will be given the opportunity to recycle an item which has already been dealt with in previous units.

It is worthwhile pointing out that the functions chosen serve the learner's needs in order to fulfil his first interactional interchanges: greeting, introducing, making appointments, offering, accepting, refusing, etc.\*

Another factor which may be of value when trying to find out the criteria chosen, is that only after unit 10 does the book introduce formulae, like "Would you like"? , "Can I

\*We feel that the functional items in *Starting Strategies* have been chosen in accordance with the criteria of easiness and general usefulness. However, we could argue that those are functions necessary at any level, in so far as we often refuse proposals or invitations in any stage of the learning process. Nevertheless, to express an "adamant" refusal and subsequent anger which may result from it, the learner must be prepared with a more complex linguistic apparatus to express him/herself in an appropriate way, which makes us think that concerns of facilitation have been taken in the conventional use given to the functional items in the book.



have", "Shall I"?...

After having a look at the kind of language displayed in each unit we came to the conclusion that the criteria underlying the principles of presentation and selection of the material in *Starting Strategies* seem to have been organised on the basis of a structural grading from the easiest items to the more difficult ones.

This would seem to fit the pattern suggested by Wilkins for overall syllabuses and is perhaps suitable here too:

..."an overall syllabus could be conventionally grammatical in its early stages and would become semantic i.e. functional only in its later stages".<sup>98</sup>

We shall now turn our attention to *Say what you mean in English* to see the criteria established for the gradation of its content. Conversely to what has happened in *Starting Strategies*, here, there has not been any attempt to grade structures from the easiest to the most difficult ones.

A brief look at the "key to the units"<sup>99</sup> will immediately show that grammatical structures are there to serve certain functions, which indicates that concerns for the functions of language prevailed over a gradation of the grammatical structures chosen. We also observed that units 2, 3 and 4 deal respectively with "needs" "likes and dislikes" and "describing objects". Although we recognize that the learner will surely need these functions to perform meaningful activities in the foreign language some day, we wonder to what extent the idea of stating one's needs, likes and dislikes or describing objects ("my car is old, you need another one". "I like cornflakes for breakfast", or "This is a round plate") should have priority over other functions of language.

No criteria for the grading of functions is offered or apparent, other than the author's personal preference. This

is not altogether unexpected where an author attempts<sup>t</sup> a purely functional gradation, as we observed earlier in a quotation\* from Stratton:<sup>100</sup>

"There are several taxonomies but they all fail to provide an adequate model of language function... an attempt to apply any of the taxonomies to a speech situation requires a large number of subjective decisions on the part of the analyser".

### 3.2.7 LEARNER'S IMMEDIATE COMMUNICATIVE NEED

We shall analyse whether the items which compose the various units of the two books in question lead to the fulfilment of the immediate communicative needs in the light of some characteristics of the Notional/Functional approach pointed out by Mary Finocchiaro (1979). She says that in Notionally/Functionally based books:

..."The title of the unit is always expressed in Functional terms so that learners are immediately given the necessary mental "set" or readiness so essential for focussing their attention on the communicative purpose of the dialogue".<sup>101</sup>

The titles of the units in *Starting Strategies* are not always expressed in functional terms\*\*, which may sometimes make it difficult for the learner to know before hand what he/she is supposed "to do" in terms of use<sup>102</sup>. We come across, for instance, units such as number 8, whose title "Where exactly do you live?" simply introduces the Simple Present tense for habitual actions:

"Sheila Barnes lives in Manchester. In fact Sheila comes from Bolton. Sheila's parents

\*Florence Stratton's article has been quoted on page 46 of script.

\*\*Look at chart number 3 on pages 95, 96, 97.

still live there. Sheila lives and works in Manchester now and visits her parents at weekends".<sup>103</sup>

The content of unit 10 (p.54) is introduced through a situational topic: "Coffee time". Whereas unit 17 (p.95) suggests ways of inviting people to go to places: "An invitation".

In this respect therefore, Abbs & Freebairn have not complied with one of the principles of the Notional/Functional approach. On the other hand, however, the authors have organised the linguistic content of the book in different sets, thus indicating clearly the function or functions the learner has just been introduced to, through a dialogue:

We chose unit 10 as an example of what has just been explained:

Unit 10: "Coffee time"

Neville: Jackie! It's coffee time!

Jackie : Coming!

Neville: Well! This is the cafeteria

Jackie : It's nice and modern!

Neville: Would you like a cup of coffee?

Jackie : Yes, please.

Neville: And a biscuit?

Jackie : No, thanks. Just a cup of coffee.

SET 1      OFFER,    ACCEPT    and    REFUSE

1 - Look at the picture and offer something to eat and drink like this:

"Would you like a cup of coffee?

"Would you like a . . . . . ?

Accept the things your partner offers like this:

"Would you like a cup of coffee?"

"Yes, please."

"Would you like a sandwich?"

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

3 - Now refuse the things your partner offers like this:

"Would you like a cup of coffee?"

"No, thanks."

"Would you like a glass of beer?"

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

At the end of each unit, in order to reinforce what has already been learnt, there is a section called "Remember" in which those functions are presented once again.

#### REMEMBER

This how you:

1 - Offer something: Would you like a cup of tea?

Accept something: Yes, please.

Refuse something: No, thanks.

2 - Ask for and give things: Can I have a biscuit, please?

Yes, here you are.

What has been displayed above shows the author's concern for providing the learner with the sort of language which may lead to an immediate fulfilment of his/her communicative needs. This arrangement, we believe, gives the learner good opportunities to deal with meaningful language, for it draws his attention to the communicative purpose of the teaching material chosen for each specific unit.

*Say what you mean in English* conforms more closely to Finocchiaro's stipulation than *Starting Strategies*, insofar as the list of contents lists both key expressions and

notions, so that the learner is in no doubt as to what he is to deal with. As for the actual material of the units, every effort is made to drill the structure and provide the means of generating utterances to serve a number of associated speech situations.

Unit 25 (p. 104-105) is organised as follows:

Listen to this:

Man : I usually drive to work  
It takes me about twenty minutes

Woman: I usually walk to work.  
It takes me about forty minutes

Man : I usually wash the car on Sunday  
It takes me about half an hour

Woman: I usually bake cakes on Saturday  
It takes me about two hours.

Now say this (listen and repeat)

- He usually drives to work; it takes him about twenty minutes.
- She usually walks to work: it takes her about forty minutes.
- He usually washes the car on Sunday; it takes him about half an hour.
- She usually bakes cakes on Saturday; it takes her about two hours.

Answer these questions:

How long does it take him to arrive at work?

How long does it take her to walk to work?

How long does it take him to wash the car?

How long does it take her to bake the cakes?

How long does it take you to get to work?

What do you usually do on Sunday?

How long does it take you?

Look at this:

How long does it take  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \int \text{him} \\ \int \text{her} \end{array} \right\} ?$

It takes  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \int \text{him} \\ \int \text{her} \end{array} \right\}$  about  $\left. \begin{array}{l} \int \text{ten} \\ \int \text{twenty} \\ \int \text{forty} \end{array} \right\}$  minutes.

However, the fulfilment of the learner's immediate needs involves more than a simple title. We need to consider the extent to which the particular use of language taught in each unit may be put to immediate use outside the classroom. This is where *Say what you mean in English* fails most clearly. We do not deny that Andrew's twenty-five notions are valid and would be most useful to the learner who managed to digest and learn how to use them. It seems to us, however, that the disjointed nature of the book makes this most unlikely. Each of the notions is a discrete item to be learnt separately with neither linguistic nor thematic sequence to link them together as an aid to memorizations. The result is thus a collection of items to be learnt, and as such the book as a whole suffers from the same defects as a phrase book, a user of which, notes Wilkins,

"is able to ask the way, but is then unable to understand the answer".<sup>104</sup>

### 3.2.8. AUTHENTIC LANGUAGE

There has been much controversy in deciding whether it is possible to teach foreigners real language. There are those who think it difficult to teach without resorting to simplified versions of language. They point out that it is impossible to present foreign language in its entirety, because of constraints of time, insufficient exposure to language, lack of practice, thus advocating a drastically simplified, reduced version of language. Others think it possible to teach real language, using other ways than resorting to extreme simplification of structural patterns,

so as to facilitate the learner's task. Pit Corder, in an article mentioned above, entitled "Learner language and teacher talk" says that what is modified in the course of the foreign language teaching process is the rhetoric of the teacher. This must happen so that he may adapt his talk to the student's level. He says that the nature of modification or adaptation in their rhetoric lies in the way the teachers "simplify the structures, restrict the range of their discourse, the vocabulary and the range of speech functions". He goes on to say that in addition to this they often "slow the tempo of their speech, shorten the utterances, do a lot of rephrasing, etc.". <sup>105</sup>

We see then that it is not the grammatical structure which is to be simplified for, as he says, "the grammatical system used is the full complex adult target language". He adds that the simplifications which occur happen to be at a "rhetorical level" and not at a grammatical level.

Wilkins, himself, is very specific on the question of authentic materials:

"This suggests that in language courses generally, but in courses based on a notional syllabus in particular, much more attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of a receptive competence and that an important feature of materials designed to produce such a competence would be authentic language materials. By this is meant materials which have not been specially written or recorded for the foreign learner but which were originally directed at a native-speaking audience. Such materials need not even be edited, in the sense that linguistically difficult sections would not be deleted, although the linguistic content of such texts could well be exploited in various ways. The importance of incorporating such materials into courses is that they will provide the only opportunity that the learner will have to see the contrast between the somewhat idealized language that he is acquiring and the apparently deficient forms that people actually use, to meet the forms of language current in speech and to develop the ability to understand language that he will never need to produce.

In short, such materials will be the means by which he can bridge the gap between classroom knowledge and an effective capacity to participate in real language events".<sup>106</sup>

People who advocate communicative teaching are in favour of using "unedited transcripts of real conversation so as to get learners used to dealing with authentic pieces of language".

Before analysing whether the material of the books in question comprises samples of authentic language, we shall quote Keith Morrow's definition of authentic language. For him:

"an authentic text is a stretch of real language produced by a real speaker to a real audience. It is not a made up text produced by an imaginary writer or speaker for an imaginary audience and designed to practise specific language points rather than to convey real information."<sup>107</sup>

In *Starting Strategies* samples of authentic language have been used to a certain extent. The examples in Appendix 1 deal respectively with newspaper advertisements, boards providing information on departures and arrivals of trains, buses and planes as well as some interviews.

Thus the claim made in the introduction to the book to the effect that "spoken and written language is introduced by means of authentic reading and listening practice..." seems to be fairly justified as the tapes accompanying them faithfully reflect the written dialogues already established as reasonably authentic. A further sample of authentic listening material is provided by the accompanying set of songs.



*Say what you mean in English* does not introduce this kind of authentic material. It seems to us that here, language, as Morrow points out, has been designed to "practise specific language points rather than to convey real information".

A thorough look at the book's format will show us that units mostly consist of the following characteristics: a set of pictures serves to exemplify the structure selected to present a given meaning. Then the same structures are drilled with negative and affirmative answers.

Although there is no evidence that the dialogues found in the former book (*Starting Strategies*) have been recorded "live", which shows that a great deal of the language used in the book has probably been contrived so as to fit the situations and notions which constitute its content - the book, as we have seen above, fulfils, in some aspects, some of the requirements made by the supporters of communicative teaching.

The same, however, cannot be said of the latter, whose teaching material has not been produced so as to provide the learner with "authentic language" in the sense used by the advocates of "communicative teaching". Consider, for example, the dialogue presented in Unit 4, page 22:

Man : What's this?

Woman: It's a pencil.

Man : And what's this?

Woman: That's a pencil, too.

Man : What's this one like?

Woman: It's a long one.

Man : And what's this one like?

Woman: It's a short one.

Most people would agree, we feel, that this conversation is hardly likely to occur in a real life situation.

### 3.2.9 COHESION AND COHERENCE

To see to what extent the author has organised his material so as to produce cohesive and coherent pieces of discourse it is first necessary to say a little about the nature of discourse. We chose as the basis for our research Widdowson's book *Teaching Language as Communication*, which studies the nature of discourse and also attempts to consider carefully its practical applications.

Widdowson suggests that:

"The 'communicative' approach is, of course, very much in vogue at present. As with all matters of fashion, the problem is that popular approbation tends to conceal the need for critical examination. There seems to be an assumption in some quarters, for example, that language is automatically taught as communication by the simple expedient of concentrating on 'notions' or 'functions' rather than sentences. But people do not communicate by expressing isolated functions any more than they do so by uttering isolated sentence patterns. We do not progress very far in our pedagogy by simply replacing abstract isolates of a linguistic kind by those of a cognitive or behavioural kind. If we are seriously interested in an approach to language teaching which will develop the ability to communicate, then we must accept the commitment to investigate the whole complex business of communication and the practical consequences of adopting it as a teaching aim. Such a commitment involve, I believe, a consideration of the nature of discourse and of the abilities that are engaged in creating it".<sup>108</sup>

To see to what extent concerns of "effective communication" have actually been taken into account, we shall try to analyse both *Say what you mean in English* and *Starting Strategies* in the light of the above discussion.

We shall begin with unit 3 (p.p 16-19) from *Say what you mean in English*. Its title -"Do you like it"- suggests what the lesson is going to deal with: "likes and dislikes". We shall make an attempt to find out to what extent the author has succeeded in establishing relations between the sentences, in order to present the learner with meaningful bits of language.

Unit 3 develops as follows:

1 - Listen to this:

My name is John  
I like black coffee  
I like sugar in my coffee  
I like pop music  
I like cornflakes for breakfast  
I like cowboy films.

2 - Now say this (Listen and repeat):

His name is John  
He likes black coffee  
He likes sugar in his coffee  
He likes pop music  
He likes cornflakes for breakfast  
He likes cowboy films.

3 - Listen to this:

My name's Janet  
I like tea with milk  
I like chocolate biscuits  
I like classical music

I like hot buttered toast  
I like comedy films.

4 - Listen to this:

John: Janet, do you like black coffee?  
Janet: No, I don't. Do you?  
John: Yes, I do.

John likes black coffee but Janet doesn't.

After having seen the example above it is not difficult to conclude that the teaching material of unit 3 has been presented as a list of isolated sentences which, in turn, express selfcontained propositions. Since the learner is required to listen and repeat an inventory of related sentences, it seems to us that despite the emphasis given to the notion "likes and dislikes", this material does not take on any communicative value. We shall have more to say about this when we discuss "usage" and "use" below.

Although we have already chosen unit 11 in *Starting Strategies* to carry out part of our analysis, we are now returning to it, because it is intended to teach the same kind of language we have just seen: "Likes and dislikes".

Similarly to unit 3, the content of unit 11 is also suggested through its title: "Do you like tea with lemon?" The way of introducing the content in unit 11 remains the same throughout the book: by means of a short dialogue.

Having a look at the two materials we immediately see some advantages of the latter over the former:

a) The subject has been conducted so as to have speaker/hearer participation - thus preventing the learner from being exposed to a mere list of linguistic structures aimed at teaching "likes and dislikes".

b) The replies are appropriate in that they sometimes involve using only part of a sentence, thus providing the learner with <sup>an</sup> opportunity to practise natural exchanges, which are appropriate both with regard to form and function of the structures.

Maria: Here you are. . . . Sugar?

Neville: Yes, please

Maria: Mind the cup

Neville: Oh! sorry!

Maria: That's all right! I'll get a cloth.

The dialogue presents hesitations, pauses etc. which show the author's concern to avoid "bookish" language, thus forming a link between what is being taught and language as it is used outside the classroom.

According to Widdowson, "normal linguistic behaviour does not consist in the production of separate sentences but in the use of sentences for the creation of discourse".<sup>109</sup>

By comparing the two units we can say that *Starting Strategies* has approached the material so that the learner may learn how to use sentences communicatively in discourse, since they are meaningful in relation to what comes before or after them, thus forming a cohesive and coherent piece of discourse. For the sake of explicitness we shall quote Widdowson who points out that:

... "Sentences take on value\* in relation to other propositions expressed through other sentences. If we can recognize this relationship and so are able to associate a sentence, or part of a sentence, with an appropriate value, then we recognize a sequence of sentences or sentence parts as constituting cohesive discourse".<sup>110</sup>

\*Widdowson distinguishes between "signification" and "value". He says that meaning may be of two kinds: "sentences have meaning because they express propositions by combining words into structures in accordance with grammatical rules". This stands for signification". The second kind of meaning, value is "that which sentence or parts of sentences assume when they are put to use for communicative purposes.

Here we have then correct English sentences which seem to have been organised both cohesively and coherently so as to provide the learner with communicative language. Moreover, the material has been duly contextualized through the short dialogue. Despite the authors' concentration on language to express "likes and dislikes" they do not lose sight of the whole, thus propitiating opportunities for genuine communication.

We now move on to the second part of the question, which has been formulated in the following way: "Are we (in Widdowson's terms) offered examples of "use" or merely "usage"?"

We know from experience that the learning of a language not only involves the ability to introduce linguistically correct sentences. It also involves "an understanding of which sentences or parts of sentences are appropriate in a particular context".<sup>111</sup> Widdowson draws a distinction between what he calls "usage" and "use". The latter, he says, constitutes "that aspect of performance which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication".<sup>112</sup>

To see to what extent concerns of "effective communication have actually been taken into account, we shall try to analyse both *Say what you mean in English* and *Starting Strategies* in the light of the considerations taken above.

Unit 4 of *Say what you mean in English*, whose title is "What's it like?", has been chosen by way of illustration.

Below are some samples of language extracted from unit 4.

- 1 - Woman: What's this?  
Man : It's a plate.
- 2 - Woman: What's this?  
Man : It's a coin.

3 - Woman: What's it like?

Man : It's round.

4 - Woman: And what's this like?

Man : That's round too.

5 - Woman: The plate's round and the coin's round too.

6 - Man : Yes, they're both round.

If we have a critical look at the material covered by this unit we shall notice, at once, that despite the correctness of the sentences chosen, they do not constitute instances of appropriate use. It is not likely that two people would get together to develop such a piece of conversation. Since the book aims to teach communication it seems to us that such a piece of communicative intercourse, if it ever occurred, would represent extremely unnatural use of language. As Widdowson points out, "the situation that the teacher has devised is not one which would normally require him to make use of such a sentence".<sup>113</sup> In other words, since the learner knows what a plate is as an object, and what it looks like, it is pointless to act like this. What our learners, as foreign speakers, do not know is that, in English, that familiar object is called "a plate". Consequently despite its correctness the sentence does not assume a natural function within the situation, i.e. the situation devised does not match the sentence used. In cases like these, once again following Widdowson's ideas it would be more natural and correct to say: "The English word for this is 'plate'. Similarly he could complete the information by saying that "objects with this shape are said to be 'round' in English."

In his key to units the author's division of material shows that unit 4 has been programmed to teach "language for description". Although the linguistic items in this unit correspond to his claims, i.e. they do display descriptive language, the book fails in that the teaching material has been introduced as the level of "usage" but not at the level of "use", thus contradicting the author's claim to be "teaching the learner to communicate in English, even at an

elementary level".<sup>114</sup>

We shall now consider unit 9 (p. 47) of *Starting Strategies*. We chose it on account of the apparent similarity of the structure already analysed: "This is a piece of plastic", unit 4, in *Say what you mean in English* and the one, now in question: "This is the toilet". As we can see the difference in meaning is brought about by the different words "a" and "the": while the former structure indicates a descriptive use of language, in the latter it has been used to show places.

"One bed, one sit, K & B" is the title of unit 9 (p. 47). As we see Abbs and Freebairn have used a situational label. A short dialogue has been introduced so as to contextualize the pieces of language to be taught. Let us consider it:

Jackie: How do you do! I'm Jackie Young. I'm from  
the Town and Country Flat Agency.  
Mrs.Parker: Oh, yes, the Flat Agency. Come in.  
The flat's upstairs.  
Jackie: Thank you.  
Mrs.Parker: This is the bedroom.  
Jackie: Yes.  
Mrs.Parker: And that's the sitting room.  
Jackie: Mm! It's nice and big. Is this the bathroom?  
Mrs.Parker: Yes, it is.  
Jackie: Oh! It isn't very big. Is this the kitchen?  
Mrs.Parker: No, it isn't. That's the kitchen over  
there. This is the toilet.  
Jackie: Oh, I see. Well thankyou very much.  
Mrs.Parker: That's all right.

Here, as we can see, sentences have been used appropriately, for we can think of situations in real life in which we use language of this kind. Assuming that the flat has not yet been furnished, or that the doors are shut, it seems to



us that the material contains certain contextual conditions which determine its status as an instance of "use" rather than mere "usage".

We have tried in this chapter to examine the extent to which the writers of two textbooks purporting to apply Notional/Functional principles have succeeded in producing teaching materials which offer something original and yet pedagogically valid. It was, of course, not our intention to disparage one book by comparison with the other, and if *Starting Strategies* appears to have met the requirements we specified to a greater extent than *Say what you mean in English*, this is not to say that the latter is to be condemned. Our analysis was based on nine questions which seemed to us to be relevant in the light of Notional/Functional theory, but they were by no means the only questions possible. A different set of questions might have resulted in a different picture, and it is certainly possible that *Say what you mean in English* has several advantages that *Starting Strategies* lacks. But this is not our real concern here. The main aim, underlying all the analysis, has been to discover both the possibilities and the limitations of Notional/Functional syllabuses, and it is therefore to this that we return in our final section.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

What then can be concluded from this analysis? We have suggested that Andrews and Abbs & Freebairn have each in their own way tried to produce teaching materials based on a Notional Approach, with very different results. Andrews appears to have been so concerned with maintaining a strictly semantic approach that his book as a whole seems to lack any form of sequence. It has none of the "generative" capacity that is so necessary if the student is ever going to reach the stage where he can create new language for himself. On the other hand, Abbs and Freebairn appear to have given a good deal of thought to this "generative" aspect by introducing a story line, maintaining the same characters and generally selecting easier structures before difficult ones. However, in order to make the course suitable for beginners they have had to restrict the number of notions to be taught, and they have done this by narrowing the content so much that what is intended as a textbook for general beginners turns out to be a rather specialised course for young students living in Britain. If this is in fact the authors' intention, how do we explain the wide publicity given to the book overseas and the authors' demonstration tours around Brazil, for instance? The authors seem to have assumed highly-motivated students, lively native or near-native-speaker teachers and surroundings in which to put the material learnt to immediate and regular use. However, in many parts of the world such conditions do not apply. Teachers whose command of English and acquaintance with British customs are limited might find *Starting Strategies* a difficult book to use with beginners, motivated or not.

Wilkins himself states: "Notional Syllabuses as such do not to my knowledge, exist."<sup>115</sup> Is this as true today as Wilkins felt it was in 1976? Our findings seem to indicate that it is, and perhaps the principal reason why this should be so lies in the demands of Notional/Functional theory, some of which are rather elusive. Wilkins maintains:

"The essence of a Notional Syllabus will be in the priority it gives to the semantic content of language learning." 116

It will be noted that the ~~phrasing~~<sup>pressing</sup> here is much more vague than may appear at first sight. All courses must contain an element of semantic content, or they would be reduced to the mere reciting of paradigms. Nor can the structural content be ignored, otherwise we are left with a simple phrasebook. So what Wilkins is really saying is that we should pay more attention to the semantic content than the syntactic when preparing a syllabus. But he does not say how much more attention, so that the textbook writer lacks firm guidelines in this respect. Wilkins continues:

"The first step in the construction of any language syllabus or course is to define objectives. Wherever possible these will be based on an analysis of the needs of the learners and these needs, in turn, will be expressed in terms of the particular types of communication in which the learner will need to engage." 117

This again is a very sensible proposal, but it is neither new nor clear-cut. Teachers have always tried to teach with an eye to the needs of the learner, even where this means simply preparing him to pass an examination at the end of the course. But preparing students for an examination whose content and format are well-known to the teacher is a much easier task than trying to predict the future communicative needs of the students. Oral communication between two or more people is usually a spontaneous interchange of views and opinions, questions and answers, and as such almost every conversation is unique. As Dakin puts it:

"Communication is essentially personal, the expression of personal needs, feelings, experiences and knowledge, in situations that are never quite the same. And though we may often repeat ourselves, much of our conversation, about even the most mundane matters, is to some degree novel. We hear or produce utterances we have never heard or

produced before in quite the same form, and which, in consequence, cannot be practised by the teacher or previously learnt by the learner."<sup>118</sup>

It is thus extremely difficult, if not impossible, to predict what our students will need to say. This does not mean, of course, that we can have no idea of what they will need to communicate, but it does suggest that a semantically-based approach alone will not be sufficient to ensure success. Somewhere in the course we must provide the learner with the structural base from which he can later construct his own language in accordance with his own needs. Structurally-graded courses are, of course, produced on this principle but while teaching the student how to generate new language they consistently fail to teach him how to communicate in real life. Semantically-based courses start with the aim of teaching communication, but run the risk of failing to provide the necessary structural foundation.

Wilkins, of course, does not claim that his approach solves all problems, merely that it offers a better chance than structurally-graded syllabuses of providing communicative competence. He has several strong reservations about the value of Notional Syllabuses for global courses, for instance, and implies that beginners would probably be better served with structurally-graded material until they have grasped the basic grammar of a language. This, as he points out, would be the weakest application, the stronger alternative being the one in which the course producer would adopt semantic criteria in the selection of grammatical items from the very beginning.<sup>119</sup> Where he feels the Notional Approach would be most useful is in the more restricted areas, such as courses of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where needs can be clearly defined, if not entirely predicted. He suggests, for example, that medical students will require some familiarity with the way descriptions, definitions, generic statements and instructions are expressed in English.<sup>120</sup>

This need for an awareness of the rhetorical functions of sentences has recently been recognised by a number of linguists and a good deal of research is being carried out (notably by Widdowson) into this aspect of language. It is perhaps in the area of ESP therefore that the Notional Approach to language teaching will eventually prove most useful.

To conclude, the Notional/Functional Approach is still in its infancy. Many writers and teachers have embraced it whole-heartedly and dismissed the Structuralist Approach as old-fashioned and ineffective, while others prefer to cling to older and well-tried methods, regarding any innovation with suspicion. In the present state of affairs it seems to us that a middle position represents a better vantage point. Notional/Functional theory is full of promise. In many ways it breaks new ground and has provided another way of looking at the problems of language teaching. If the theory is at present still rather difficult to put into practice, this is perhaps because in teaching a language we are dealing with individuals whose needs, aptitudes and motivations vary enormously. Ultimately, the problem may well be a human rather than a linguistic one.

## 5. A FOREWORD TO THE CHARTS PRESENTED

To undertake an analysis of the criteria set up by Andrews and Abbs & Freebairn we find it necessary to provide a set of charts in which the programmatic content of the books in question is displayed. Both grammatical and Notional/Functional elements have been looked at.

The following is the order in which they are presented:

Numbers 1 and 2: tables of the grammatical content of *Starting Strategies* and *Say what you mean in English*.

Numbers 2 and 3: a key to the units in the two books, containing the notions and functions selected.

Numbers 5 and 6: charts of the material contained in each unit, drawn in comparative terms (The material chosen to carry out this work has been extracted from "English Grammatical Structure" by Alexander et al.

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We shall refer to "stages" since the material in "English Grammatical Structures" has been organised into "Stages" and further on subdivided into "units".

GRAMMATICAL CONTENT CHART I  
STARTING STRATEGIES

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UNIT	Tense	Plurals	Modals	Aux.	Mood	Negs	P R O N O U N S			A D V E R B I A L S				P R E P O S I T I O N S			
							Demon.	Personal	Possess.	Place	Freq.	Time	Manner	Origin.	Place	Time	Transp.
1	Present				Declarative Interrogative	not		It, he, she	your	over there							
2				do				I, you									
3							This		his, her								
4																	
5															next to, in behind, in front of opposite, near		
6																	
7			must		Imperative look at....			They, we	our, their					From			
8												now	exactly				
9										upstairs downstairs							
10	would you like? (formula)	cup (s) glass (es) sandwich(es)															
11																	
12												Soon	quickly				
13	Future (realized by present)											late in the morning " " afternoon " " evening					
14			Can you? what shall I do?							at the station							
15					Imperative Let us....					next							
16	Past											quite well	quite, well				
17	I'd love to										always, often sometimes usually, never						
18																about	by car
19												early					

UNIT	Tense	Plurals	Modals	Aux.	Mood	Negs	P R O N O U M S				A D V E R B I A L S				P R E P O S I T I O N S		
							Personal	Indef.	Demons.	Posses.	Time	Place	Freq.	Manner	Orign.	Place	Time
1	Present S. Present C.			Do	Declarative Interrog.	not	I, he, she you, it.				last...				From	in	
2																	
3							they			my his her							
4									This That								
5												upstairs downstairs				on	
6	Would you (formula)	chocolates sandwiches			Imperative (negative)			some any									
7													usually				at
8			Can I May I Could I				yourself may self			your							
9			Will you Shall you Could you				me us										
10	I'd rather (formula)				Imperative (let's)		we									at	
11	d_ form																
12											soon						
13	Future: going to																
14	Future: will																
15	Present P			Have			then it										
16														carefully fast			
17	Conditional If + Present																
18					Mind your Imperative		him her										
19	you'd better (formula)																
20																	
21																	
22	gerund (ing for doing it)							any									
23	Could be													properly			
24																	
25																	



## CHART 3 - STARTING STRATEGIES

## NOTIONAL / FUNCTIONAL CONTENTS

UNIT	TITLE	NOTIONAL/FUNCTIONAL SETS.
1-	My name's Sally	Set 1- Ask somebody's name and say your name.
2-	I'm a journalist	Set 2- Ask and say where places and people are. Set 1- Greet people formally and introduce yourself Set 2- Ask and what somebody's job is. Say what you job is.
3-	Hello and good bye!	Set 1- Introduce people and greet informally. Set 2- Ask and say what somebody's job is(2) Ask and say somebody's name
4-	Looking for a flat	Set 1- Ask and talk about marital status. Set 2- Spelling Set 3- Say your telephone number
5-	Looking for a flat(2)	Set 1- Ask and say where places are.
6-	CONSOLIDATION UNIT	
7-	I'm from Melbourne	Set 1- Introduce people(2) Set 2- Ask and talk about nationality Set 3- Ask and say where people are from.
8-	Where exactly do you live?	Set 1- Ask where people live Say where you live Set 2- Ask and say where people live exactly.

UNIT	TITLE	NOTIONAL/FUNCTIONAL SETS.
9-	One bed, one sit K&B.	Set 1- Show and ask about places Set 2- Express satisfaction and dissatisfaction Set 3- Ask and talk about cost(1)
10-	Coffee time	Set 1- Offer accept and refuse Set 2- Ask people for things and give people things Set 3- Ask and say what people like.
11-	Do you like tea with lemon?	Set 1- Ask and say the time Set 2- Ask what you like Set 3- Ask and say what people like.
12-	CONSOLIDATION UNIT	
13-	Train to Coventry	Set 1- Ask and say the time(2) Set 2- Ask and talk about fixed time
14-	Shopping in Coventry	Set 1- Ask people to do things. Agree to do things Say you can't do things Set 2- Ask what people would like and way what you would like. Set 3- Ask for and give specific information
15-	Happy Birthday!	Set 1- Ask and talk about dates Set 2- Ask for and make suggestions. Agree and disagree with suggestions Set 3- Express pleasure

UNIT	TITLE	NOTIONAL/FUNCTIONAL SETS
16-	A nice weekend	Set 1- Ask people what they want to do Ask what you want to do. Set 2- Ask and talk about the past
17-	An invitation	Set 1- Answer the telephone: Say your name and start a conversation Set 2- Arrange to meet somebody Set 3- Invite people to do things Accept and refuse invitations to do things.
18-	Going to work	Set 1- Ask and say how people get to work Say how you get to work Set 2- Ask and say how often people do things Set 3- Ask and say how far away places are Set 4- Ask and say how long journeys take Set 5- Ask and say how much things cost.
19-	Focus on people at work.	Set 1- Ask and say what people do every day Say what you do every day. Set 2- Ask people about their jobs. Say who people work for and where they work. Say who you work for and where you work.

## CHART 4 - SAY WHAT YOU MEAN IN ENGLISH

## NOTIONAL / FUNCTIONAL CONTENTS

UNIT	KEY EXPRESSION	NOTION
1-	Where do you come from?	Personal details
2-	I need a...	Needs
3-	Do you like?	Likes & Dislikes
4-	What's it like?	Describing objects
5-	Where is it?	Location
6-	Would you like one?	Offer
7-	What do you usually do?	Habit
8-	May I?	Permission
9-	Will you?	Request
10-	Let's...	Suggestion
11-	What did you do?	Narrative
12-	Can you?	Ability
13-	Going to	Intention&Inevitability
14-	It'll...	Future occurrence
15-	Have you done it?	Completed action
16-	Have to	Obligation
17-	If...	Condition
18-	Mind! Dont' Mustn't!	Warning & Prohibition
19-	You'd better	Advice
20-	I'm sorry	Apology
21-	Have you got a...?	Obtaining service
22-	What's it for?	Function
23-	What's wrong with it?	Malfunction
24-	What do you think of it?	Approval & Disapproval
25-	How long will it take?	Duration

NOTE: The left hand column consists of some of the sentence patterns representative of the six stages devised by Alexander et al in English Grammatical Structure; they are part of the inventory of sentence patterns and Grammatical Structures which have been compiled to serve teaching purposes at the six levels. The right hand column represents the linguistic realizations contained in the 25 units of "Say what you mean in English."

Stage	Sentence Pattern	Unit	Example	Stage	Sentence Pattern	Unit	Example
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adj NP + vt + Adv. P	1	I'm English I live in England	2	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup> object	15	Have you read this book
3 1 3	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup> object NP <sup>1</sup> + vi NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adj + A. clause	2	He needs a.... It's raining I'm tired because....	2	NP <sup>1</sup> + have to + infinitive	16	You have to fill in this form
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup> object	3	I like....	3	If + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + adv. clause	17	If they go in that field the bull will chase them.
1 1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + NP <sup>2</sup> NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adj + NP <sup>2</sup>	4	It's a.... This is a long one	3 5	Vt + NP <sup>2</sup> + not + infinitive NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>3</sup> + not + inf p + adv. clause.	18	Tell him not to wait She told him not to touch it because it was hot.
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adv. p	5	It's on the first floor	4	NP <sup>1</sup> + would better + bare inf.	19	You'd better do it
1 3 2	NP <sup>1</sup> + have, got + NP <sup>2</sup> object Would + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt Shall + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>3</sup> + NP <sup>2</sup>	6	I've got some Would you like? Shall I get you a drink?	2	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>3</sup> + NP <sup>2</sup>	20	Have you left me any?
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + Adv. Part + vt + Adverbials	7	He usually stays in bed late	1 2	There + be + NP <sup>1</sup> NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>	21	Is here a smaller size? I'll take it
2	Can + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>	8	Can I use your phone?	4 4	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup> + Infin. clause. NP <sup>1</sup> + Be + for + gerund	22	I need it to sharpen a pencil with If is for measuring with
2 3	Will + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup> Would + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>	9	Will you shut the door, please Would you pass the sugar, please	3	NP <sup>1</sup> + vi	23	If doesn't work
3 2 4	NP <sup>1</sup> + could + vt + gerund Let + NP <sup>2</sup> + vt + Adv. p NP <sup>1</sup> + would Rather + bare inf.	10	We could go sightseeing Let's stay at home I'd rather stay	3 6	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + that clause NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + conditional clause	24	He thought the vegetables were a bit tasteless He wonders whether it goes with the curtains
2	A.P + NP <sup>1</sup> + vi + adv. p	11	Last Sunday he got up at 9.00	4	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>3</sup> + Adv. p. + Inf. clause	25	It'll take him about half an hour to wash car.
2 3	Can + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + that clause	12	Can you drive? He says he can drive				
2 3	NP <sup>1</sup> + Be + going to + inf. NP <sup>1</sup> + think + that clause	13	I'm going to win I think he is going to....				
2	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + adv. p	14					

STAGE	SENTENCE PATTERN	UNIT	EXAMPLE	STAGE	SENTENCE PATTERN	UNIT	EXAMPLE
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + NP <sup>2</sup> compl.	1	My name is Tom	2	NP <sup>1</sup> + Would + VT + NP <sup>2</sup>	14	I'd like some bread
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adv. p.		It's over there				
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + NP <sup>2</sup> compl.	2	I'm a film director	1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adv. p.	15	Tessa's birthday is on Monday
				2	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>3</sup>		What shall we give her?
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + NP <sup>2</sup> compl.	3	Sally is a journalist	2	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + inf.	16	He Wants to go home
				2	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>		He did my homework
				2	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adv. p.		I was in London
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adj.	4	He is married	3	Would + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + inf. clause	17	Would you like to go to the cinema?
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adv. p.	5	The post_office is near the hotel	1	NP <sup>1</sup> + adv. part. + vt + adv. p.	18	I always go by car
				4	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>3</sup> + adv. p.		It takes me about an hour.
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adv. p.	7	He is from America	1	NP <sup>1</sup> + adv. part + vt + NP <sup>2</sup> + adv. p.	19	I sometimes have lunch in the canteen
1	Prepositional V. + NP <sup>2</sup>		Look at my car		NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + adv. p. + adv. p <sup>2</sup>		I work in an office in Manchester
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + adv. p.	8	We live in England				
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + be + adj. + adj.	9	It's nice and big				
3	Would + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>	10	Would you like a biscuit?				
2	Can + NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>		Can I have a biscuit?				
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + NP <sup>2</sup>	11	Do you like Frank Sinatra?				
3	NP + vt + that clause		He thinks it's all right				
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + adv. p.	13	The film starts at 7.15				
1	NP <sup>1</sup> + vt + adv. p. <sup>1</sup> + adv. p <sup>2</sup>		He arrives at 4 o'clock in the Morning.				

## 6. NOTES

<sup>1</sup>MACKEY, W.F. Method Analysis. In: Language Teaching Analysis. 4 ed. London, Longman, 1974. p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 144-5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 151-2-

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 151-5-

<sup>6</sup>DAKIN, J. The Language Laboratory and Language Learning. London, Longman, 1973. p. 11-22.

<sup>7</sup>ALEXANDER, L.G. Practice and Progress. London, Longman, 1973. pp. vii-viii

<sup>8</sup>WILKINS, D.A. Linguistics in Language Teaching. 3.ed. London, Arnold, 1974. p. 168.

<sup>9</sup>DAVIES, A. Language Testing Symposium. London, Oxford University Press, 1968. p. 2. A more detailed analysis of the subject can be found in this book.

<sup>10</sup>MORROW, K. Techniques of Evaluation for a Notional Syllabus. Reading, University, 1977. p. 1-11.

<sup>11</sup>AUSTRALIA. Commonwealth Office of Education. Situational English. London, Longman, 1967. p. v.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. Teacher's book, p. 92.

<sup>13</sup>MALEY, A. & DUFF, A. Drama Techniques in Language Learning. Cambridge, University Press, 1978. p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 2-3.

<sup>15</sup>MORROW, K. Teaching the Functions of Language. ELT Journal, 32(1): 9-15, 1977.

<sup>16</sup>OCKENDEN, M. Situational Dialogues. 3.ed. London, Longman, 1974. p. 28.

<sup>17</sup>DAVIES, p. 2.

- <sup>18</sup> DAKIN, p. 13.
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- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 49.
- <sup>29</sup> HYMES, D.H. Models of the Interaction of Language and Social Setting. Journal of Social Issues, 23:8-28, 1976.
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- <sup>32</sup> LYONS, J. Semantics 2. London, Cambridge University Press, 1977. p. 725.
- <sup>33</sup> More information on Speech Acts can be found in LYONS, Semantics 2, p. 725.



- <sup>34</sup> LYONS, Semantics 2, p. 727.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 728.
- <sup>36</sup> LEVINE, J. A Language Learning Material Analysis. IRAL, 15(2):112, May 1976.
- <sup>37</sup> WIDDOWSON, H.G. & CRIPER, C. Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching. In: ALLEN, J.P.B. & CORDER, S.P. The Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics. London; Oxford University Press, 1975. v. 2, p. 202.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 203.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 205.
- <sup>40</sup> WIDDOWSON, H.G. Teaching Language as Communication. London, Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 29.
- <sup>41</sup> VAN EK, J. The Threshold Level. Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1975. p. ii.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 4-5.
- <sup>43</sup> WILKINS, D.A. Notional Syllabuses. 2.ed. London, Oxford University Press, 1977.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 2.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 14.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 21-2.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 25-38.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 22.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 22.
- <sup>50</sup> HALLIDAY, M.A.K. A Course in Spoken English. Oxford, University Press, 1970. p. 32.
- <sup>51</sup> WILKINS, p. 38-39.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 40.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 41-54.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 55-6.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 60-1.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 61-62.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 69

<sup>63</sup>However, Keith JOHNSON in The Application of Functional Syllabuses (Reading, University, 1978. p. 31-2) says that it is possible...

<sup>64</sup>In the same article Johnson presents... of functions would be introduced. (JOHNSON, p. 34-7).

<sup>65</sup>WILKINS, Notional..., p. 79.

<sup>66</sup>MORROW, K. Syllabus Design: some problems of putting theory into practice. In: \_\_\_\_\_. Functional Materials and the Classroom. Reading, University, 1978. p. 17.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>68</sup>MACKEY, p. 161-201.

<sup>69</sup>ALEXANDER, L.G. et alii. English Grammatical Structure. London, Longman, 1975. p.

<sup>70</sup>STRATTON, p. 133.

<sup>71</sup>WILKINS, Notional..., p. 65.

<sup>72</sup>ANDREWS, J. Say What You Mean in English. London, Nelson, 1976. 116 p.

<sup>73</sup>ABBS, B. & FREEBAIRN, I. Starting Strategies. London, Longman, 1977. 134 p.

<sup>74</sup>ANDREWS, p. i.

- <sup>75</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>76</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, back cover.
- <sup>77</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>78</sup>WILKINS, Notional...., p. 79.
- <sup>79</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, back cover.
- <sup>80</sup>WILKINS, p. 78.
- <sup>81</sup>MACKEY, p. 157.
- <sup>82</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, p. 54.
- <sup>83</sup>ANDREWS,
- <sup>84</sup>See chart number 2 on page 94.
- <sup>85</sup>ANDREWS, p. 65.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 77.
- <sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 101.
- <sup>88</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, p. 29-75.
- <sup>89</sup>WILKINS, Notional...., p. 69.
- <sup>90</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, back cover.
- <sup>91</sup>ANDREWS, p.
- <sup>92</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, P. 25-111.
- <sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 78.
- <sup>94</sup>CORDER, S.P. Learner Language and Teacher Talk. Audio Visual Language Journal, 16(1):5-13, Spring 1978.
- <sup>95</sup>WILKINS, Notional...., p. 66.
- <sup>96</sup>SILVA, C. Recent Theories of Language Acquisition in Relation to a Semantic Approach in Foreign Language Teaching. ELT Journal, 24(4):342, July 1975.

<sup>97</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, p. 60.

<sup>98</sup>WILKINS, Notional..., p. 68.

<sup>99</sup>See the chart on the 'Key to Units' of Say What You Mean in English, p. 126.

<sup>100</sup>STRATTON, p. 133.

<sup>101</sup>FINNOCHIARO, M. The Functional-Notional Syllabus: promise, problems, practices. English Language Forum, 17(2):11-20, April 1979.

<sup>102</sup>See chart number 3.

<sup>103</sup>ABBS & FREEBAIRN, p. 45.

<sup>104</sup>WILKINS, Notional..., p. 79.

<sup>105</sup>CORDER, p. 12.

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<sup>108</sup>WIDDOWSON, Teaching..., p. 118.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>114</sup>ANDREWS, back cover.

<sup>115</sup>WILKINS, Notional..., p. 55.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

<sup>118</sup>DAKIN, p. 6-7.

<sup>119</sup>WILKINS, Notional..., p. 68.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

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## UNIT 13

a.m. = morning  
p.m. = afternoon (1 p.m. - 6 p.m.)  
evening (6 p.m. - 12 a.m.)

3 a.m. = three o'clock in the morning  
3 p.m. = three o'clock in the afternoon  
8 p.m. = eight o'clock in the evening

3. Say all the times in a different way. Look at the example in sentence 1



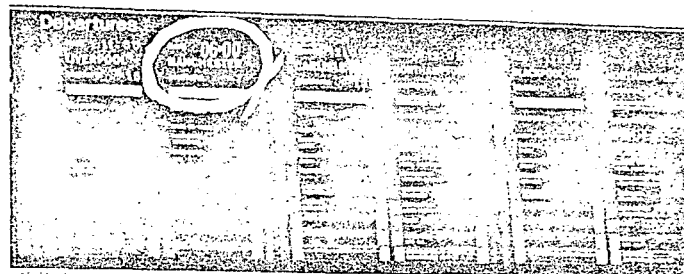
1. The train leaves at 6 a.m.  
The train leaves at six o'clock in the morning.
2. The bus leaves at 7 p.m.  
The bus leaves at .....
3. The plane arrives at 1.30 a.m.  
.....
4. The film starts at 9 p.m.  
.....
5. The film finishes at 10.45 p.m.  
.....
6. The bank closes at 3.30 p.m.  
.....

4. Look at the information. Ask and answer like this:



What time does the shop open? It opens at 9 o'clock.  
What time does the shop close? .....

**HOURS  
OF  
BUSINESS**



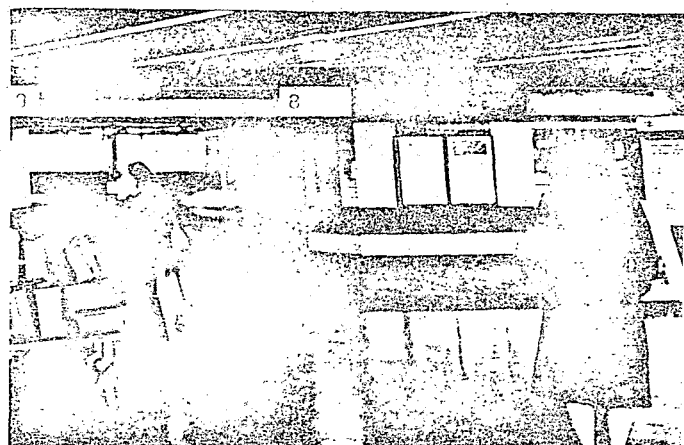
GATE CINEMA North Hill 727 5751  
Wenders **KINGS OF THE ROAD** (AA) 1.30, 4.35, 8.00. **THE CONFIRMIST** (X) & **MURDER CZECH STYLE** (X) 11.15

JACEY LEICESTER SQUARE (437 2001). **BLACK EMMANUELLE** (AA) 2.00, 5.15, 8.25. **WHITE EMMANUELLE** (X) plus **CAGED WOMEN** (X). Progs 3.30, 5.00, 7.40.

LEICESTER SQUARE THEATRE (930 5252). **NETWORK** (AA). Ser progs Today 2.00, 5.15, 8.25. Seats bkble for 8.25 prog Mon-Fri & all progs Sat & Sun except late night show.

LONDON PAVILION. Picc Circus (437 2982). **CARRILLO** (X) Cont progs Today 3.55, 6.10, 8.25.

ODEON HAYMARKET (920 2748 2771) Mel Brooks **SILENT MOVIE** (A) Ser. progs. Today 5.30, 8.30.



## UNIT 13

## EXTENSION

## MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

## Domestic Passenger Arrivals

	Airline	Flight No.	Day	Dep	Arr
Birmingham	DA	DA053	Daily	0900	0935
Bristol	DA	DA055	Daily	1845	2005
Edinburgh	BE	BE916	Daily	0840	0925
Edinburgh	BE	BE4483	Daily	1835	1920
London	BE	BE4406	Daily	0800	0845
London	BE	BE4424	Daily	1415	1500
Newcastle	DA	DA052	Daily	0750	0835
Newcastle	DA	DA056	Daily	1800	1845

## 1. Roleplay

You go into a travel agency in Manchester. You want to be in London at 10 a.m. Work with a partner. Find out:

- What time your plane leaves Manchester
- What time it arrives at London airport
- What your flight number is

Now do the same for these situations:

You want to be in Edinburgh at 8 p.m.

You want to be in Birmingham at 10.30 a.m.


You want to be in Newcastle at 9 a.m.


<p>Tourist Information Board</p> <p>July 14th-21st</p> <p>WELCOME TO SLAXTON-ON-SEA</p> <p>.....</p> <p>Here is some practical information about the town to help you make your stay as pleasant and enjoyable as possible.</p> <p><u>BANKS</u></p> <p>Lloyds 44 High St. Hours 9.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m. (Thursday also 4.30 - 6.00 p.m.)</p> <p>Barclays 31 High St. Hours 9.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.</p> <p>National Westminster 14 George St. Hours 9.30 a.m. - 3.30 p.m.</p> <p><u>POST OFFICE</u></p> <p>51 High St. Hours 9.00 a.m. - 5.30 p.m.</p>		<p><u>DEPARTMENT STORES</u></p> <p>Whittings 12 West St. Hours 9.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. Late night Monday 9.00 a.m. - 7.00 p.m. Early closing Thursday 1.00 p.m.</p> <p>John Manns 46 High St. Hours 9.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. Early closing Thursday 1.00 p.m.</p> <p><u>CINEMAS</u></p> <p>The Odeon High St. Showing this week July 14 - 21 "Holiday Fun" Perf 7.00 - 8.45</p> <p>The Rex George St. Showing this week until Wednesday "A Day in the Life" Perf 7.15 - 9.00 From Wednesday "Flight to Hong Kong" Perf 7.00 - 8.45</p> <p>ENJOY YOUR STAY IN SLAXTON-ON-SEA</p> <p>.....</p>
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2. Find out the same information for your town. Write the information for your brochure.

# EXTENSION

1.  Listen to the interview with Walter Mooney and follow the pictures and text on page 108

2.  ring and should not included. There is class-consciousness and the gaunt R. Leavis looms large.

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their undergraduate days and to set it all down unflinchingly and con brio is no mean achievement and Ms Thwaite has pulled it off. I was not able to detect a single example of slack writing in her collection; Mr Hayman's, alas, contains two or three contributions that might better have been consigned to oblivion.

The Oxford book is a masterpiece of its kind, although, if one wanted to be

Thatcher, another contemporary; Antonia Fraser, in a well sustained piece, sees it all in terms of clothes and in some ways she is right: "At at Oxford, in academic dress, I succeeded in what I suppose had always been my aim: looking exactly like everybody else"; Alan Coren, in what is, predictably, the funniest piece, womanizes in digs on the Ilfley Road; Martin Amis did so less successfully; in fact,

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## FACE TO FACE

This week with *Barry Miles* from the Royal Exchange Theatre.

Barry Miles is an actor from the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. Just now you can see him in Shakespeare's 'Othello' where he plays the leading role.

Our reporter, Sally Baker, asked him about his typical day. He says: "I get up at ten, have breakfast - orange juice, an egg and a cup of black coffee - and read the paper. Then at eleven I go to the theatre and rehearse. Not Othello but our next production. Then what? A late lunch at the pub with the others. Then we're free in the afternoon. Sometimes I go to the cinema, go shopping or see friends. Tea at five, then I go back to the theatre. The evening performance starts at seven thirty. After the performance? We all go to the theatre bar, have drinks and talk. I usually have some sandwiches then. I go to bed late, about one o'clock. Yes, that's quite a typical day for me".



The c  
of c

Now write an article for the Manchester News and say what Barry did yesterday

'Ath

UNIT 19



Ask people about their jobs  
Say who people work for and where they work  
Say who you work for and where you work

What does Walter do? He's an engineer.  
He works for Ford.  
He works in a car factory in Coventry.

Name	Job	Company/Authority	Place of work
Walter Mooney	an engineer	Ford	car factory in Coventry
David Richards	a teacher	Manchester Council	school outside Manchester
Martha Hunt	a doctor	National Health Service	hospital in Manchester
Sally Baker	a journalist	The Manchester News	office in the centre of Manchester
Doris Blake	a housewife		at home
Paul Blake	a technician	Focus Films	studio at the Focus Film Centre

1. Ask and answer like this:



What does David do? He's a .....  
He works for .....  
He works in a .....

2. Now ask your partner what he/she does, like this:



What do you do?  
I'm a/an .....  
(I work for .....)  
I (work in a/an .....)  
(study at .....)